

Meeting Minutes - Ohavi Zedek Board of Directors

Date: July 23, 2019

Present: Vivien Rabin, Rabbi Amy, Sarah Glassman, Wayne Senville, Adam Bluestein, Bill Miller, Erika Geremia, Naomi Barell, Steve Zeidenberg, Nat Lew, Sergey Shpaner, Becky Wasserman, Jeff Priest, Jessica Schechter Kane, Mindy Evnin, Jeff Potash

Absent: Judy Rosenstreich, Karen Corbman, Zoe Panitch-Hecht

Trustees: Judy Hershberg,

Facilitator: Vivien

Meeting Recorder: Adam

	Topic/Outcome – Who	Discussion	Action Steps
5:30 - 5:35	D'var Torah—Rabbi Amy	Rabbi got back from Israel yesterday. She shares story of parsha Pinchas, in which the high priest gets angry over an Israelite man having relations with a non-Israelite women, and kills them both. God rewards him for this. On the “good” side, the portion also has the story of the Daughters of Zelophehad, who successfully demand the right to inherit property from their father. Both exclusion and inclusion were a response to an incredible fear, the Israelites concern about the loss of their peoplehood in a time of great change. This led them to do drastic things. Pinchas serves as an example to address and recognize our own fears, and to open up to be inclusive without fear.	
5:35 - 5:45	Approve minutes and review action items—Vivien	Sergey suggests minor wording changes (now reflected in June 2019 minutes). Nat moves to make Sergey’s changes; Jeff seconds. All vote to approve minutes. Review action items -- hunt for treasurer still issue. Can we expand search into the preschool family population? Erika asks for description of Treasurer job. Bill will send.	
5:45 – 5:55	Big Thinker’s project—Jeff Potash Outcome: To update the board on big thinker’s project	Jeff Potash address board on efforts to engage OZ community in long-range thinking about the property and ways to stabilize membership moving forward. Not quick fixes and simple solutions. He has been engaging people informally, and has a couple of great	Big Thinker group to present ideas to board at unspecified time, before holding congregation-wide town

		<p>meetings with a small group of longer-term, dedicated members. They are still processing their ideas but will present to board soon and there are notes that board can review now. The goal is to expand the “Big Thinking” exercise to the board and whole congregation.</p> <p>Rabbi Amy discusses Yoram Samets’s idea to convene “town meetings” to engage different constituencies at OZ, to get people in a room and ask simple and direct questions. Rabbi would like to convene these.</p> <p>Adam: Can board see what this smaller group is thinking about before we open up to congregation?</p> <p>Jeffrey Potash: Yes, we should share.</p>	meetings.
5:55 – 6:10	<p>OZ mission statement—Vivien Outcome: To discuss latest version of OZ mission statement</p>	<p>We never voted on approving new OZ Mission Statement, which we developed based on work done at board retreat. Vivien: Should we have big thinker group look at this before we vote on something? Jeffrey Potash: Group had some feedback. Nat: Not inclined to do that. We went through painful process of many hours of work to get to current statement. Adam: Also not inclined to sidetrack the process; we are a word or two away from final statement. Jeffrey Potash: Mission statement should address core principles and problems and opportunities to differentiate OZ that group has identified. Would like to share but don’t mean to intervene in process. Becky also questions changing the process we have been following to arrive at this statement. Discussion of word, “worship,” that is problematic “Spiritual practices” is alternative suggestion. Rather than workshop this in this meeting, Adam proposes sending two versions of statement with alternate word choices for board to review and approve at next meeting. Rabbi: Agrees with Adam that we should follow through on process from retreat and small working group that put statement together.</p>	Adam to circulate two versions of Mission Statement for approval at next board meeting.
6:10 – 6:20	<p>Rabbi’s report—Rabbi Amy Outcome: To continue to engage board in work of the Rabbi</p>	<p>Hartman program was outstanding. The topic was nationalism. Rabbi will share more from that soon. She was invited to lead a prayer service at the Kotel, which was unfortunately scheduled against Joey Weisberg just down the street. Went well. Rabbi poses question for</p>	

		<p>thought: How much of OZ focus should be on a learning community vs. a prayer community?</p> <p>Preparing for High Holidays now. Any questions about that, let her know.</p>	
6:20 – 6:25	<p>Introduction—Cantor Steve Outcome: To welcome our new Cantor</p>	<p>Cantor Steve expresses gratitude for the hiring process, and pleasure to be partners with the Rabbi and Sarah, and all of the board. He feels lucky to serve this community, with its history, seriousness, and warmth. Rabbi: We are lucky and blessed the Cantor is here. Cantor: Please invite someone to come with you on a Friday, will be trying out new things.</p>	<p>Please invite someone to come with you on a Friday night service!</p>
6:30 – 6:58	<p>Report on Preschool benefit for staff—Sarah/Wayne Outcome: To discuss the possibility of a preschool benefit for staff</p>	<p>Wayne discusses background: Grace had a preschool benefit, which came out of an agreement made outside of her original negotiated salary and benefits package. There was previous board discussion about whether to extend some level of preschool tuition support and/or priority enrollment as a benefit for OZ “staff.” Since this would be a “contingent” benefit -- used only when a person is in a position to use it -- figuring out fiscal impact is a bit complicated. Wayne asked Sarah to do some research on what other congregations do, to establish norms to inform our decision.</p> <p>Sarah discusses methodology and findings of her survey. She did Google search for synagogues with an internal preschool, all denominations, excluding Chabads. Respondents are from different regions, urban, suburban, and rural. Identified 71, got 30% response rate. Most offer some level of preschool tuition support for staff (details in memo).</p> <p>Becky: “Staff” is not defined in memo. Sarah: Hourly employees are excluded. Naomi: The principal position only part-time salaried employee here. Sara: Looked at FT and PT staff, but not hourly employees. Vivien: What about grandparents, would they get benefit? Sarah: One school did that.</p> <p>Discussion of who should pay for this benefit, OZ or the preschool?</p>	<p>Any followup questions for Sarah to research re preschool benefit?</p>

		<p>Which budget does it come from? Sergey: Why does it have to be OZ? We've looked at how we allocate the facility fees and sunken costs. People see OZ not breaking even, but every program somehow looks into the black. Should cost of this benefit be built into preschool budget? Erika: Tuition is already on high end; would have to raise tuition to cover for students not paying full rate. That would risk mission to "provide affordable care." Becky/Nat: The preschool is small, and absorbing a "surprise" in budget is challenging. Erika: We have small school and extensive waiting list. What if we don't have space in classes? Rabbi: Seems simple. Cash paid by OZ for a benefit, just like health or other benefit. Sarah: Intention is for it to be a paid benefit. Wayne: Are there followup Qs for Sarah to research?</p>	
7:00 - 7:35	Minyan		
7:38 - 7:47	<p>Preschool report—Erika Outcome: To continue to engage board in Preschool activities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There has been a delay installing fencing for new natural playground, because Lowes had no one to do installation of fencing. Now finding a fence company and working on zoning permit. 2. Started new parent educator training instead of "parents nights." Using professional development budget to talk about topics parents want to learn about, which also acts as professional development for teachers. Topics have included emotional intelligence, sleep. Asking parents what else they want to learn about. Goal to do 4 big ones a year. Next is talking to children about race. Would whole synagogue be interested in joining? Opening up to Hebrew School families, for example, or other Hebrew educators, could be way to bring OZ community more into the preschool. Vivien: Talk to Judy Hershberg re potential event to discuss race. 3. Preschool has 2nd birthday in August, has gone from 3 classrooms to 5; 14 families, now double. 4. Currently, there are slots open for 3-yr-old and 5-yr-old. That age bracket can be hard to fill. 5. Need to get approved for ACT 166 funding, which provides \$3k a year per child for qualifying preschool, without regard for socioeconomic factors. Goal is to apply for that by January. It's 30- 	<p>Erika to connect with Judy Hershberg about congregation-wide learning event on race.</p>

		<p>day turnaround once info is in. Have to prove that programming contains certain amount of non-religious programming, and that teachers meet specific licensing requirements.</p> <p>6. Cantor Steve has been amazing -- lots of engagement with the kids.</p>	
7:48 - 7:58	Preschool benefit , continued	<p>Bill can run some numbers on proposal. Adam: Supports idea of preschool tuition assistance as a benefit paid by OZ. Becky: Related question is do members get different preschool price than non-members? Sarah: That is very common. Erika: Members do get priority enrollment now. Jeff Priest: If we give priority to members, and discounted rate, plus providing assistance to staff, that could be big burden for OZ, ultimately.</p>	<p>Sarah to research additional questions: Size of staff and preschool size; member vs. nonmember rates, etc.</p>
7:58 – 8:03	Midyear outreach to members— Vivien Outcome: To decide on midyear telephone outreach to members	<p>Vivien spoke with Sarah and thinks it's not the best time to do midyear followup calls to people from annual appeal. They are getting dues letters now. Nat: Wish there was a way to check in, even with the arrival of dues packet. There's a benefit of checking in. High Holidays are late this year -- there's a window between Labor Day and Rosh. Can we call and wish people a happy new year and "invite" them for holiday services. General agreement that this is a good idea, to call and wish people happy new year. Can probably do same people as last time, or switch up. Sarah has notes that we made last time, some are hard to understand. Jessica: Any other bio info we can get on people would be helpful. Naomi: Also, this is an opportunity to invite people to HS opening service.</p>	<p>Prepare/check call lists for board members for pre-High Holiday check-in calls with congregants.</p>
8:03 – 8:06	Hebrew School report— Naomi Outcome: To continue to engage board in Hebrew School activities	<p>Registration opened on the 1st; inquiries from 3 new students, plus a returning student who not here last year. Classroom spaces are being reconfigured.</p> <p>Still need an additional Sunday teacher!</p> <p>Moving forward with Kitah Ziyen curriculum.</p> <p>Nadav: Waiting on funding details, but there's interest from kids in the program.</p>	
8:07– 8:22	Executive Director's report— Sarah Outcome: To continue to engage the board in the work of the Executive	<p>1. DHS grant update. Now in second phase of grant review, with FEMA. Administrator in Waterbury says we should hear back in Aug or Sept. Expect about \$18k grant. Works on reimbursement model:</p>	

	<p>Director</p>	<p>we pay for qualifying improvements and submit invoice for payback in 2-6 weeks. Bids from contractors were already submitted with grant application. But scheduling work can take time. Can't start work on anything now until grant approved. Rabbi: Is doorbell for small sanctuary in grant? If not, let's get quote to install.</p> <p>2. USCJ: Sent dues abatement request and should hear back soon. Requested grant to make dues \$9k vs \$17k. Don't anticipate any hangups.</p> <p>3. Immigration action. OZ was asked to come to planning meeting for 7/28 March in Williston to ICE data center in Williston, which holds data used nationally. Rally supported by Never Again Action, a Jewish group doing planned arrests at various ICE facilities. Focus on Jews bearing witness. Rabbi is out of town but they are trying to find another Jewish speaker. Rabbi offered some suggestions. Cantor Steve and Sarah drafted email to send to congregation.</p> <p>4. Cantor and Sarah worked on messaging around new gun policy to send to congregation. Vivien and Rabbi reviewing, and hope to get out this week.</p> <p>5. Strategic spending. Sarah has started going through contracts, looking for potential savings.</p> <p>6. Sarah was asked to put her name forward for faith-based position on governor's state council for domestic and sexual violence. She would serve on behalf of OZ. She is likely to get the position, which would involve meeting for a day once a quarter.</p> <p>7. Security. Vivien says that we got quote for security services that was too high, so going to keep working on this. CLAL is doing a rabbinic seminar/webinar with top security specialists re high holidays.</p>	
<p>8:22</p>	<p>Committee updates—Vivien Outcome: To share committee information and to update on where we are concerning board liaisons with committees (see attachment sent by email 7/19)</p>	<p>Skip.</p>	

<p>8:23 – 8:45</p>	<p>Budget review/discussion—Bill See financial reports sent by email on 7/18 Outcome: To discuss budget information</p>	<p>Budget was sent out. We got a stern response from someone about shortfalls. Bills says we don't need radical program cuts, but just paying attention to budget. We do have unplanned shortfall—need a revenue source or spending cut that we don't know how will happen. Wayne: Are we likely to repeat some things that created variances last year? Bill: Not much. Will work on donor complacency, cost-cutting, sticking to budget. Sergey: as matter of governance, state of budget is different from what we told congregation. Bill says that will be updated in Sept. or Oct. Voice article. Sarah: Budgets are living documents. Nat: Remember this in context of longer plan. Becky: Consistently confusing is the promise to pay back x amount of \$, etc. -- the "planned unfunded revenue." Do we need to think about that in different way? The way that board agreed to pay back large deficit within 3 years is not practical. That's very fast. It's put us in a position where it looks like we have huge deficit. Adam: Can we get more information on the history of this deficit. Vivien: Yes, in executive session next time. Jeff: From this point forward, does current budget address this income loss from prior year? Do we plan to target portion of this? Bill: There's a plan for almost all of it; made the "hopeful" fundraising number a little smaller. There are a bunch of fundraising efforts in place. Becky: Greater policy question going forward is that this wishful fundraising amount doesn't make sense. We didn't hit it this year. Bill: We did make an \$80k gap in first year. Wayne: Bigger problem is what comes down road in a few years. Need fundraising strategy. Naomi: Sarah is checking for overspending and redundancy. Everyone has done everything they could to be as frugal as possible. We're not going to find enough savings to address these issues that way. Sarah: It's not going to save budget, but will save thousands here and there. Nat: It could be a question of looking at things that</p>	
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		are “sustainable” or not. Naomi: It does go back to the mission statement. Are we offering too much? Each thing we offer needs to be put up to some kind of litmus test. Vivien: We need to stress importance of sustaining the general fund. Sergey: Can the board break down how allocate facilities cost? See how real costs are?	
8:\$5		Bill moves to adjourn, Jeff seconds. All in favor.	

New Action Items:

- “Big Think” group to present ideas to board at unspecified time, before holding congregation-wide town meetings.
- Adam to circulate two versions of Mission Statement for approval at next board meeting.
- Sarah to research additional questions: Size of staff and preschool size; member vs. nonmember rates, etc.
- Prepare/check call lists for board members for pre-High Holiday check-in calls with congregants.

A. Ongoing Action Items

- Invite new Kehillah Manager to visit OZ. **Vivien.**
- Succession planning: **Wayne, Judy+ to form subcommittee to work on.**
- *The Voice*: Include information in an upcoming issue ways to give and what different funds are for. **In process.**
- Find new Treasurer. **Ongoing.**
- Presentation on pros/cons of an ethical investing approach for endowment.

B. For Future Discussion

- Consider audit, budget meetings ahead of Congregational Meeting to help others learn more.
- Review endowment being paid back over 30 years and contribute surplus to this, reducing term.
- USCJ affiliation and interfaith marriage.
- Staffing models—program designs/ core program areas/ hopes for growth.
- Organizational and facility models (JCC, multiplex).
- Development /engagement/relationship building.
- Other long-ranging questions: buildings, growth.

