**Agenda – OZ Board Meeting**

**Date:** Thursday, January 16, 2020

**Present**: Naomi Barell, Adam Bluestein, Vivien Rabin Brown (by Zoom), Mindy Evnin, Erika Geremia, Sarah Glassman, Josh Kernoff, Harvey Klein, Nat Lew, Bill Miller, Jeff Priest, Judy Rosenstreich (by Zoom), Wayne Senville, Sergey Shpaner, Rabbi Amy Small, Rebecca Stern, Becky Wasserman

**Facilitato**r: Vivien **Meeting Recorder**: Jeff

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|  | **Topic/Outcome – Who** | **Objective\*** | **Discussion** | **Action Steps** |
| 5:35 - 5:40 | **1. D’var Torah –Rabbi Amy** |  | We are reading Parshat Shemot, beginning of Exodus, this coming Shabbat. A new Pharoah arose and then Jews were enslaved. Don’t know how long after Joseph this Pharoah arose. In communities that experience change there are opportunities for positive change but also for chaos. Now there is a new Pharoah that does not know Joseph. Difficult time. Should not repeat the Exodus story. |  |
| 5:40 - 5:41 | **2. Approve minutes and review action items—Vivien** | Resolve | Wayne moves to approve. Josh seconds. Board approves. |  |
| 5:41 - 5:43 | **\*3. Reorganizing board meetings – Vivien** | Resolve | Bottom of agenda has information about this issue. We tend to talk in circles. Three types of objectives have been added to agenda items (i.e., Resolve, Inform, Discuss) that will hopefully facilitate better outcomes.  Would like to cut back on reports. No Exec Director reports at future meetings. Vivien asks Naomi and Erika about obtaining their reports in advance of meetings. They agree. Rabbi’s report and Treasurer’s report will continue. | Before future board meetings, Erika and Naomi will share their respective reports with Vivien for distribution to board members. |
| 5:43 - 6:10 | **\*4. Security – Sarah/David Rome** | Resolve | David R. connects by Zoom. Bottom of the agenda highlights security information to be discussed. Received funding from Homeland Security to install a key card system. But Sarah has concerns about managing the system. What is best practice for our community? Does a key card system make sense for our community?  David has experience with key card system at the high school where he works. The key card system is easier and safer than the punch code system we currently have. Can control times when entry can occur. No issue of someone seeing code that shouldn’t or obtaining code by nefarious means. The actual card could be different types of devices. Can attach to key ring. Or can be worn by lanyard. If someone loses it, we can charge a nominal fee to replace it ($5 or $10 per card).  Key card per family or per individual? How will it work for Hebrew School students? At high school where David works, students don’t have cards but people stand at door letting students in. Could use same system at OZ.  Number of cards per family could depend on each family’s needs.  Security Committee discussed this issue before and David presented this issue to the committee. Punch code system is difficult to use because code changes and people do not catch up on what the new code is.  Funds from Homeland Security cover installation of key card system but not any additional funds to manage.  Sarah has spoken with a couple of different congregations that use this system. These congregations have a day school, so more people come in and out during the day, and they’re generally much larger in size than OZ.  Discussion of what we would do if we don’t implement key card system, what else would be proposed? No other options at the moment. More discussion about issue and what we do on Shabbat. On Shabbat, we have posted a sign for people to call Raul, who will let them into the building. Question about whether we can still give a key card to non-member families whose children are in preschool.  Any problems we face in implementing the system can be resolved. We will implement system and keep an eye on costs. The basic cost of installation will be less than initially anticipated.  We have $14K in donations for security. Need to prioritize expenditure of these security funds.  What about using funds for PA system? Noted that we cannot create PA system using existing infrastructure. Need to implement new system. Buzzer system is needed. Should also consider installing bollards near front entrance to prevent vehicle-ramming attacks.  Should know details before we actually install the system.  Sarah and David will work on estimates for PA system. | Sarah, David, and others will develop a plan for implementing a key card system.  David and Sarah will gather estimates for a PA system. |
| 6:10 - 6:30 | **\*5. Treasurer’s report—Sergey/Bill** | Discuss | We are $92K in the black. But the budget indicates we should be $154K in the black. However, we started with a $42K shortfall. Have made up about $33K. Preschool benefit and Cantor Steve’s salary have been less than first anticipated but preschool retirement was an added expense. Pledges have been short.  This month we sent 6-month reports to committee heads and asked them to come up with budget for next year. Will work with Finance Committee to develop budget over coming months.  Last year at this time we were ahead $141K but now $111K in the red. Have just received $75K donation for Cantor Steve’s salary but has not been recorded yet.  Hard to understand spreadsheets sent out to members in advance. Numbers alone do not tell the story. Need additional notes. Sergey: Starting at next month’s meeting, board members will receive a more digestible version of spreadsheets.  In next 6 months, we expect to spend $250K more than what we will receive. Only thing that can change this is annual appeal. We will borrow money to maintain liquidity.  Erika: Need clarification about preschool retirement benefit. Has to make it work in her budget for the program. Not aware of need to budget for teachers’ retirement in the past. Goal is to make preschool program self-sustaining. How to account for added benefit for teachers? Affects surplus shared with OZ. But preschool and OZ are one entity. Need better communication to help with her budgeting process.  Some discussion about the fact that preschool retirement benefit was originally discussed as benefit provided by OZ to employees, not by preschool program. Is this an accounting issue?  Bill: This is a bigger discussion for the board. Should preschool retirement expenses be recorded as preschool expense or OZ expense? Generally the expense lives in a program. Therefore it should be part of the preschool’s budget.  Vivien: Spoke to Rabbi Amy about sanctuary redesign. We cannot do capital campaign for anything until we show we are responsible stewards of the budget. We need to balance the budget. |  |
| 6:30 - 6:45 | **\*6. Fundraising – Josh** | Resolve | Kicking off a Fundraising Committee. Even small events will help with projected deficit. Asking for board participation in generating ideas since committee doesn’t exist yet.  Wants board to make calls to congregants. Wants board to agree to participate in all 5 bullet points at the bottom of the agenda (#6).  Suggestion that instead of every board member doing every bullet point, assign one or more bullets to specific people to increase accountability. Josh is certainly open to people specializing in certain functions. Events for board involvement will be very specific.  At next board meeting we will see deadline for bullets 1 and 5. Other bullet points will be clarified in future.  Resolved: By next board meeting, will complete bullets 1 (share 3+ fundraising ideas) and 5 (share networks for database).  Mindy moves to approve resolution. Sergey seconds. Board approves. | Before next board meeting, all members will provide Josh with 3 or more ideas for fundraising and share information about networks that can be added to future fundraising database. |
| 6:45 - 6:55 | **\*7. Annual appeal – Sarah/Vivien** | Resolve | Next step is for board to make calls to families. Sergey had idea: 4 anonymous donors will give $25 each if a member donates at least $18. Josh, Vivien, and Sergey have discussed messaging about this idea. Will be sent out tomorrow (Friday, Jan. 17). Still think phone calling will be necessary.  Vivien: The match will be for members who did not donate last year.  Need to decide what amount of time before making phone calls.  Question: How did communication by age group work out? Sarah: Very few donations from younger group.  Given low response, we are going to call most members? | Sarah and Vivien will communicate Sergey’s idea to OZ members. |
| 6:55 – 7:00 | **8. Further info concerning sanctuary redesign discussions – Rabbi Amy** | Inform | Rabbi spoke with Miriam Sturgis about visioning/financing. Have very different views. Miriam wrote to Rabbi about sanctuary seating, stating a change in seating will not attract new members. Should not be priority. Rabbi’s response: Could shift the way we are perceived in community, even if it doesn’t attract new members. Will address perception of being limiting and narrow. We can’t afford it right now. But a focused campaign on seating could be impactful. Should weave in fundraising for general fund at same time.  We need to be fiscally responsible but we should continue to discuss this issue. |  |
| 7:00 - 7:25 | **Minyan** |  |  |  |
| 7:25 - 7:30 | **9. Preschool report - Erika** | Inform | Focusing now on teachings of Martin Luther King Jr.  Workshop on talking with children about racism has been moved to this Sunday, Jan. 19, for first session. Will put out donation box to raise funds.  Act 166: Erika is enrolled in graduate course to create portfolio. She will complete a 15-week course and then take a Praxis exam. She sent an email to preschool families about the process. Hope to have Act 166 status in place by new school year, but not certain. |  |
| 7:30 - 7:35 | **10. Hebrew School report – Naomi** | Inform | Just started second semester.  Had a productive Hebrew School committee meeting. Planning a Havdalah event for families on April 4. Will include an International Passover potluck.  Will celebrate Tu B’Shvat in February and Purim on March 11.  Meeting with Nadav this Sunday to discuss MLK’s legacy and then go skating.  Board invited to attend Mitzvah Day on Sunday, Jan. 26 starting at 10 am. Thirteen students will present their b’nai mitzvah projects. Would be great for board members to hear about these projects.  Losing 13 kids next year to graduation (out of 54). Reaching out to preschool families to find out who will transition to Hebrew School. |  |
| 7:35 - 7:45 | **11. Rabbis’ report** | Inform | Article distributed in *VT Digger* about upcoming departure of Rachel Siegel from Peace and Justice Center.  Issue with Lakeview Cemetery. Burials of OZ members still occur there. Cemetery said they will not conduct burials from December through May. Could lead to a crisis situation. Suggestion received that people should sell plots at Lakeview and buy plots at Patchen Rd. cemetery. But it’s still unclear if Lakeview’s policy will change.  Still working with Rev. Wright and Imam Hasam on podcasts. Looking for public figures to be interviewed about questions they are discussing. At times it might seem there is little interfaith activity. But Muslim community is focused now on renovating building on Swift St., so little time to do prominent events yet. Imam told Rabbi they have 2 pianos that he is willing to donate to OZ. Rabbi asked Nat to inspect them. Will happen soon. Hope to obtain one or both of the pianos.  Stopping Stones project of Paul Growald not moving quickly but effort is still being made. Need to include members of African-American community.  Working on installation of Cantor Steve on March 7, both in the morning and evening. Concert in evening. Josh: Can we incorporate fundraising into this event? Rabbi will discuss with Josh.  Feen lecture by Dahlia Lithwick has been scheduled for Sunday, March 22.  Professor Jonathan Sarna will give a lecture on anti-Semitism at St. Michael’s College on Wednesday, Feb. 19.  Rabbi teaching Beit Midrash once a month after Shabbat service. Welcomes all to attend. Also welcomes all to iEngage program on Sundays.  There’s lots of agitation in world right now. Important time for us to recognize what spiritual community is for. |  |
| 7:45 - 8:00 | **\*12. Survey(s) to congregation – Vivien** | Discuss | Two surveys being developed at this time. The “Big Thinkers” group has been developing a survey under the leadership of Jeff Potash and Linda Kelliher. And the Religious Committee plans on developing a survey about services. Do we want both to be sent out?  There should be just one. Don’t see the point of Big Thinkers survey. Has been done before. Why do we keep asking the same questions and not doing anything with the information?  One survey with a maximum of 10 questions total.  Surveys are valuable, can get useful feedback if short and specific. We need to see surveys before deciding on which one(s) to be sent out. Should consider renaming Big Thinkers group.  Should be high threshold for sending out survey, on top of all other mailings that OZ can or should send, especially with appeal. How does survey fit into larger plan?  Encourage the board to look at survey with the idea of gathering information that is useful to the board in making future decisions. Survey cannot be long.  Board retreat last year and exercise with UVM students generated lots of information. What has been done with this information?  If we make phone calls as we did last year for annual appeal, can we use feedback from these conversations? How can we keep track of all of these information-generating activities? | Review/Edit prospective surveys before deciding on which one(s) will be sent to OZ members. |
| 8:00 - 8:20 | **\*13. Board retreat – Wayne/Jeff** | Resolve | Do we have a board retreat at all? If yes, then how do we go about organizing it?  Andy Robinson has been proposed as facilitator. His website has training topics. Wayne has identified at least 3 of interest.  Retreats can be a time to interact with each other in more informal ways and discuss topics without agenda restrictions.  Fundraising is a topic that would be helpful to discuss at a retreat.  Cannot afford a retreat timewise, based on all other efforts the board should be doing. However, having a training on fundraising or board functioning could be useful.  Retreats are generally a lot of talking without a useful outcome. A training on fundraising could be useful. But board members should not have to contribute money to hold a retreat.  Fundraising retreat could be led by Rabbi Amy, Josh, and Sarah. Don’t need to hire someone else.  Other potential topics: Should we work on having a new building? Should we have interfaith marriages? These could be topics for board retreat discussion.  Can’t afford to pay Andy R. right now. If we had specific problem to solve, this problem could drive the need for a retreat. But the largest issue is strategic planning. The board is tactical. We need to learn to engage in strategizing that addresses problems and become less tactical. But is this the right time for a retreat? No.  Giving the board time to engage in discussion beyond the restrictions of board meetings could be very valuable. Should brainstorm what the community could be. Great value in coming together to discuss the bigger questions outside of the board meeting structure.  Could be worthwhile to invest in someone to help train the board. Board members could send ideas to Wayne/Jeff about retreat ideas. Need to engage younger families. Could discuss this topic at a retreat. Could invite a rep from an organization that has reached younger families to share their ideas with us.  Wayne: Send us 1 or 2 ideas about topics for a facilitated discussion outside of board meeting, and we will try to come to consensus. Will send out email to board members asking for ideas and deadline for submission. | Wayne and Jeff will send email to board members asking for ideas/preferences for a board retreat.  Before the next board meeting, board members will share ideas with Wayne/Jeff. |
| 8:20 - 8:21 | **14. Voting on new members - Sarah** | Resolve | Sarah: One new member has joined OZ: Edith Moskovitz.  Bill moves to approve. Nat seconds. Board approves. |  |
| 8:21 - 9:30 | **15. Executive Session** |  | Nat moves to enter exec session. Josh seconds. Board approves.  Sergey moves to end executive session. Adam seconds. Board approves. |  |

**Information below on several agenda items – See info on reorganizing board meetings below for explanation of Objective column:**

**\*3. Reorganizing board meetings**

The goal is to make our board meetings more action-oriented. As you can see, each agenda item is labeled as either Resolve (make a decision), Discuss (get board input), Inform (share information with the board). I would also like us to move toward cutting some of the reports and having them sent out to the board in advance. In addition, I would like us to share information that we need to discuss or resolve issues here in the agenda, and to take less time explaining things at the meeting that can be read by the board in advance. Thanks Josh for suggestions to help with this.

**\*4. Security**

Sarah notes the following: “With the DHS grant, one of the items we received is a keycard access system for our door. This would mean installing a new system and finding a way to give out keycards to all member families. I feel our current keypad with code process is working. I am also concerned that if a member loses their keycard, OZ will be incurring additional expenses. Overall a keycard does not seem practical for our membership but perhaps there are others who have thoughts beyond these. We can apply to change grant funds for another purpose – so if this was no longer something that seems practical, we could apply for something else if that is on a security audit, performed by a security professional. “

David Rome, Chair of Security Committee, says that it is important to have key cards. He will attend this meeting so we can discuss this issue.

Additionally, we currently hire the police for a large event at OZ (more than 100 people). On Shabbat morning we put up a sign stating that those who don’t have the door passcode should call Raul’s cellphone. We do have $14,000 donations from congregants (connected with dues) for security and should consider how to use it.

**\*5. Treasurer’s report**

Please see Attachment A (latest financial report). In addition to budget review, we will discuss timing on capital campaign for renovations, based on budgetary concerns.

**\*6. Fundraising**

Josh will ask for ways the board can participate in fundraising activities in general, and specifically:

* 3+ ideas from everyone
* Outreach for donations (or to thank donors)
* Donation outreach for online auction
* Efforts to sell Calcutta tickets
* Comb through networks for businesses, celebrities, figures of public interest, etc where there maybe opportunities to participate in an event. Create database we can refer to for OZ connections

**\*7. Annual appeal**

We will be giving the board a list of congregants to call who haven’t responded on annual appeal. In addition, Sergey has recommended a way to raise more on the annual appeal that we plan to put into effect. Very few congregants donated to the annual appeal last year. We want to reach out to each one and let them know that if they donate a minimum of $18, an additional $100 will be donated to OZ. We are able to do this because there are four members who have each agreed to donate $25 for every member who gives at least $18 to the annual appeal (and didn’t give last year). Thanks to Sergey for this idea.

**\*12. Survey to congregation**

There are discussions about two surveys to be sent to the congregation. One drafted by Jeff Potash and Linda Kelliher. Jeff Potash notes the following intent: “to engage respondents in a thoughtful process of identifying areas of potential change that may serve to sustain and advance our shared interests in seeing OZ as Burlington’s premiere synagogue. Ideally, the structure and design of the survey will yield more than we’ve seen from past efforts that either foster narrow and specific criticisms or speak too broadly (and without prioritization) to future areas for making improvements.”

The second survey would come from the Religious Committee and be drafted by Joy Livingston.

Neither survey is ready for board review, but we need to consider how we want this to proceed, and whether or not there should only be one survey.

**\*13. Board retreat**

Jeff Priest spoke with Andy Robinson concerning our board retreat. Andy is a consultant and workshop leader (you can read more about what he does on his website: [www.andyrobinsononline.com](about:blank)). He is also the Treasurer of Beth Jacob Synagogue in Montpelier. Jeff noted that Andy “is open to leading a 4-6-hour workshop -- focusing on one or more topics (but not more than 2-3) -- on March 15, 22, April 5, 19 or 26. He said he would charge $1,000, but it could be a bit lower. He said he would "do my best to make it work financially" but I don't know how much lower than $1000 it could be.”

We need to decide whether we want to spend up to $1,000 on a retreat or to work with a congregant at no charge, given our financial situation.

We also want to decide on a retreat topic. There are some listed here ([http://andyrobinsononline.com/w/workshop-topics/](about:blank)) that we can get ideas from, whether or not we ultimately decide to hire Andy.