

Congregation B'nai Tikvah - Board of Director's Meeting - 12 Sept. 2011

Board members attending: Gary Bergman, Gary Wesalo, Renee Juro, Marcie Kfare , Mark Kasdin, Mirah Becker, Andy Ross, Arnie Miller, Ben Gottesman, Doug Smoller, Michael Weiss, Bill Greenberg, Larry Cohen, Rob Blackin, , Ruth Anne Koenick, Jeff Schwartz, Wayne Gonchar

Also attending: Rabbi Wolkoff Cantor Rockman, Sarah Schindler, Lynne Weiss-Marshall,

The meeting was called to order by President Gary Bergman at 8 p.m.

The minutes of the August meeting were approved as submitted.

Rabbi Wolkoff told board members how it is not enough to walk in G-d's path of mercy and compassion. He reminded the group that G-d's beneficence is effortless. For men to emulate G-d in his mercy, he said, they must incorporate G-d's example into their nature. Leaders in particular need to make kindness and compassion automatic if they are to fulfill G-d's plan.

The first order of business was a presentation from Evan Bernstein of Classical Caterers who seeks to redecorate the Kiddush room. His proposal calls for tile on the floor as well as some changes to the bar area, among other things. Some concerns were raised that a tile floor would be slippery. Bernstein plans textured tiles to help avoid such situations.

A. Miller moved (Koenick seconds) to accept the concept presented by Classical Caterers to install textured tile in the Kiddush room.

The motion passed by a vote of 14 in favor, none opposed and 2 abstaining.

The president's report recognized the efforts of Mirah Becker to encourage diverse activities. He also reported the executive committee's preference not to change the scrip program so as not to reduce anticipated revenue. He said about 30 families currently exceed purchase targets.

Mark Kasdin, financial secretary, reported 383 member families representing 228 full dues paying equivalents. He said about 70% of the previous year's free memberships converted to paying memberships this year. Kasdin also advised that about \$100,000 of dues and pledges still are owing from the past four years and asked for guidance on how do other congregations address such past-due balances. Finally, Kasdin told the board of a trend toward more single memberships, which might have a negative budget impact going forward.

Treasurer Gary Wesalo reported after the first month of the fiscal year that income is mostly as expected with positive revenue contributions in the dues, religious school and catering categories. He said expenses also are in line with expectations.

Rabbi Wolkoff shared some of the many programs in progress or planning, including a lecture on "how Jewish law works" as the main theme of adult education program. The rabbi also reminded

the board how even when things seem to be working well – as evidenced by the compliments for the congregation from visitors to a recent bar mitzvah – it is still necessary to take care to cover all the details lest something important fall through the cracks and break a fragile relationship.

Cantor Rockman previewed the Rejoice festival and thanked the committee for its work.

For ways and means, Arnie Miller said a casino night is scheduled for March 31. He urged coordination in prize solicitation to avoid competition for prize donations. He also suggested finding a way to thank the businesses who donate prizes for our events.

For activities, Mirah Becker asked for more coordination and sharing of resources between groups planning activities. Among the activities under consideration are a bookmark project and a Yom Hashoah lecture/discussion with an author.

For membership, Marcie Kfare said the previous free membership program resulted in 14 new member families, of which there are 12 children of nursery school age.

For schools and youth, Jeff Schwartz said the first day of religious went well though enrollment is begins at a level below projections. Nursery school also is off to a good start with enrollment above budget.

Rabbi Wolkoff asked the board to contemplate how to integrate better into the religious school environment the 10-15 congregation children currently in daily Jewish learning programs.

Ruth Anne Koenick told the board about progress toward a program aimed at raising funds for a new Torah for the congregation. A timeline and other details are in progress, but an initial announcement is scheduled for Rosh Hashanah. Donation opportunities range from \$6.13 to \$54,000.

In response to those who ask is this necessary now, Koenick said it truly is. The congregation's current scrolls are aging and in need of replacement.

Mark Kasdin informed the board of the possibility of grants from the Department of Homeland Security to improve security at the synagogue.

The board acknowledged two members. It sent its good wishes to Aaron Rosloff who recently underwent a medical procedure and to Koenick who recently was honored for her work at Rutgers on behalf of victims of sexual violence.

A motion to adjourn was made by Koenick (Gonchar seconds).

President's Report

When I was VP of activities (the first time around), I took the lead from others who felt that to build a sense of community, we needed to develop activities targeted to the needs of our congregants. And I'm glad to see that Mirah has picked up that ball and is working on a diverse set of programs to build on that idea. But, something I hadn't considered as equally important is the support we give to others in times of stress and difficulty.

I always recognized the importance of saying Kaddish for mourners but, it took me a long time to find the courage to visit a Shivah house for someone I didn't know. My first visit was to Jackie Master at the death of her mom. I had no idea who she was or who her friends were. I was somewhat relieved to find that when I got there, I recognized Hadas and I no longer felt like an intruder.

But I still feel somewhat awkward at a Shivah house whether I know the family or not. In 2008, Rabbi Wolkoff gave a very insightful lecture on the "Jewish Way in Death and Mourning." Although it was webcasted on BlogTalk Radio and subsequently posted on our website, I discovered at the party, that very few board members were aware of it. So, I took the liberty of making these CDs and I hope you'll give it a listen, especially the part about visiting a Shivah house.

As awkward and uncomfortable as you may feel, that's the measure how much good you would actually be doing. Both, for yourself and the strengthening of B'nai Tikvah's bond to the family. If it would make you feel any better about it, give me a call and I'll go with you.

Last month we entertained a change to the gift card program, whereby the cap would be removed on the maximum amount of credit a family would receive. After looking at the figures, it was determined there were over 30 families already buying more than their quota and that by removing the cap, we would be losing more that we could possibly gain by providing this incentive.

Jeff Cadoff is in charge of ushering for the High Holidays this year. On Thursday, he and I are going to Wayne New Jersey for a session of security training for Jewish organizations. The program is sponsored by Federation, NJ homeland security, numerous other organizations and is hosted by the Passiac County Police Academy.

Speaking of the High Holidays, I can't emphasize how important it is that you wear your badges and greet people, especially those you don't know with a smile.

We also still need front desk ticket takers who can walk that thin line of greeting people and asking them to show their tickets. Jeff Cadoff will host an orientation meeting shortly.

Vice President Reports

Report from Administration for September 12th board meeting:

Parking Lot - Have a new company coming on Tuesday to give us an estimate for the drainage. They have done work for the YMCA in Fanwood that has a very similar parking lot drainage system as we have. We will also be setting up a yearly contract so we never have to go through this again. We will also be repainting the parking space lines before the holidays. In the near future the fire lane lines and possibly a line down the middle of the entrance to our parking lot will also be painted.

Exterior lights in parking lot and Temple grounds: Work begins this week....all new energy efficient lighting will be installed and all lights will be working.

Caterer - Evan will make a presentation to the board on his concept of what he would like to do in the Kiddush room.

Ritual - Everything is shaping up nicely for the High Holidays. Please do not forget to sign up for usher and other duties. We will try to keep the noise to a minimum in the lobby by setting up a chat room in the Kiddush room. Beverages will be served (RH only).

Parsonage - Working with the Rabbi on when he is moving so we can start planning what we need to do with the house. Either get ready to rent or sell. This will not happen until after the holiday season so a discussion on this can wait until next months board meeting

Cemetery - We have a new committee leader, Art Cederbaum, and will work with the committee after the holidays.

Decor - Wanted to do some work in the sanctuary prior to the holiday. Explained that we do not want to piece meal this and to continue getting estimates put together for the complete make over. Expecting to make a proposal to the board in early spring.

Proposed Shabbaton - Working with Dot Cohen to help with the logistics to make this happen. Will be meeting with the head of the region of USY, our USY board, youth committee, and Dot Cohen the week of Sept 19th to make sure a plan is in place and everything runs smoothly during the Shabbaton for our members and the visiting USYers.

Also will be working with the Youth Committee to spruce up the youth lounge which will include at a minimum new carpeting and blinds, hoping to get new furniture (donated), possibly painting of the room and new posters. All of this with the goal to make a warm and fun environment for our kids at their synagogue.

Maintance - Starting this week all class rooms will be cleaned on Friday afternoon along with the bathrooms in the school wing. Chabad does not leave it a mess, but our children and school staff deserve a cleaner learning environment than what they had this past Sunday.

Sorry I am unable to make this meeting I will be in Texas for work. As always thank you everyone for your help and support and if there is anything that you need to discuss with me on making things run smoother at CBT do not hesitate to contact me.

David Cukor

Activities

Adult Enrichment Committee's Work Program:

Adult Enrichment Committee Met in August

- Established macro-scale goal of marketing existing activities to the entire congregation under CBT banner. Sisterhood and Men's Club, both represented on the committee, will facilitate cooperation and sharing of funds when necessary to enhance and streamline programming. Goal: To create, not through words, but through our actions, a more welcoming non-threatening environment that makes it easier for all members to "jump in" and engage in the synagogue world around them. Programs that are user friendly and geared towards specific interest groups and members on the margins.

- September through January existing activities on calendar marketed in the manner described above.

- January through June the following new adult enrichment activities will be implemented:

**** Yiddish Club, ** Talmud Study Club**

**** B'nai Mitzvah-Jewish 101 Class**

These classes will help us meet the goals of those members who recently "stepped up" to share their voices with us through our new committee.

- Bookmarks that say "CBT-Live-Love Learn" in a lovely design with website citation on one side, and special events and activities listed on the back with date and time will be created and distributed at our High Holiday services this year. If the pilot program is successful, will be expanded to 2012. The hope is that members will appreciate this more personal touch to the way in which we convey information about activities, and that each bookmark can be kept "on the person" in the book that they carry around to read during the day, or placed in a pocket book or wallet. Rather than the official calendar and the email blasts and the Hakol, all of which do a wonderful job presenting information, this condensed simple bookmark may work to keep members engaged in the activities available to them at the synagogue by integrating those activities into their daily lives.

Yom Hashoah:

Daniel Mendelsohn, the author of The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million will be speaking at CBT in April, 2012. This will be a memorable evening and it is my hope that we can spend some time at a future BOD meeting to discuss the book so that all of us can be vested in making our special night with the author successful.

ISSUE: Every month I would like us to look at that month's calendar page and any representatives from any of the events from that month, say a few words regarding what will be taking place so that everyone on the BOD is aware and engaged about what we are all up too.

Bikur Cholim Meeting this Thursday at 6:00 pm