

Beth El Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes August 1, 2018

Members Present: Abby Steele, President; Neal Goldman, Immediate Past President; Karen Toker, Vice President; Sherill Herzfeld, Vice President; Rachel Marcus-Hendry Mitchell, Secretary; Chip Morris, Treasurer; Stuart Rosenthal, Ron Van, Judy DeArman, Donne Ordile, Ed Mercel, Grace Belkin, David Marco, Ron Rapaport, Vickie Kennedy.

Rabbi Matuson was in attendance.

A quorum was established, and the meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Abby Steele, President.

Approval of July 2018 Minutes: July 12, 2018 minutes were approved and accepted.

D'var Torah: Rabbi Matuson addressed the Board: "The (new book) of the Torah this week is the Devarim, it is Moses's farewell service. He is not going to the promised land, he is not talking to his peers, they died, but rather he is speaking to the younger generation, as they will enter the promised land. In Deuteronomy, the syntax of this book I really like. The storms of his life are over. He is trying to speak to this new generation. He is speaking about love. He personally hasn't known much love, he wasn't raised by his parents, his sister and brother betrayed him. And yet he is talking about the beauty of love.

What about Judaism, and the way people look at it? It seems to have become fractious these days and these are the same things Moses addressed. People have become disconnected from Judaism, from the lives of loved ones, more anger, bitterness, fear. In a community that is supportive of one another, our emotional intelligence is vital, if not more than our intellectual intelligence. The question is what does this have to do with me, what's the goal for us in Judaism? I think this portion has to do with character development. It is important to pay attention to the things going on within our lives. This is an exploration in how we think, how we act, what goals are maybe more relevant to the daily lives we live. And I think this is what Moses was also addressing.

The most important thing is to consider, what do you love? People are hungry for meaning. Moses's message teaches us joy. Take a look within yourself. That's a tradition our religion is saying to us. Pay attention to love. That's what I'd like to begin with for our High Holidays. Am I the person I want to be?" He then blessed the Board with a prayer and told us, "I love this place and I want to give back."

President's Message: Abby Steele, President of the Board, welcomed the new Board members and asked everyone to introduce themselves. She asked for Board representation to present gifts and mazel tov to Bar/Bat Mitzvah students. Abby commented "We have some really great momentum and a lot of people have stepped up to implement terrific programs and services. We are ambassadors of that momentum. We have a lot of great things going on and we can't be naysayers. We have to talk about all the great things going on and coming up. No negativity. We can talk positively about our campaign for paying down the mortgage, the Liaison Committee, the Religious School,

new members, etc. We have got to be a positive influence and make a concerted effort to talk about the good things happening here, not the negative stuff; not about each other, nor about what we do here. And if you can't be positive, maybe this is not the Board to be on. Thank-you."

Treasurer: Chip announced that we have no new members but know that with Grace's leadership we should have some new members soon.

Chip then passed out the financial Budget vs Actuals from July 2017- July 28, 2018. Since this is August 1, we do not have all the numbers in for the latter part of July. He pointed out that although the bottom line shows a net income of over \$40,000, it is misleading because we did not have all the receipts, nor dues revenue recorded. He wants to make an adjustment where need be.

New Business:

High Holiday Honors letter- It came in the mail two weeks ago. Please let us know what you wish to do and then the Rabbi will send you your honor. Neal asked that we let him know if you cannot fulfill your honor.

Mortgage Reduction Campaign- Rabbi Matuson would like to give-back to our Synagogue. The following is what he wishes to do: Beginning in March 2019 Rabbi can start drawing Social Security at the same time as his salary. Rabbi has asked Beth El to reduce his salary from its previous level by this \$30,000 per annum. Beth El agrees that these savings are to be used solely to reduce the principal on the synagogue's mortgage. Beth El will make these additional payments monthly (\$2500/month) regardless of other expenses.

Abby shared that "David and M.G. have so graciously come forward to match the Rabbi's reduction in salary, they will each contribute \$15,000 per year for three years. We now have a commitment of over \$180,000 over a three-year period of time to reduce our mortgage." Rachel inquired about how this would be donated and stressed that it is important that it be designated as going straight to the mortgage, not to the operating funds. Karen inquired about a building fund account and thinks it would be nice to discuss it. Since we were, in the past, in financial distress, we rolled the money into operating funds. She now questioned how that would work. Chip commented that he will discuss this with the financial committee. He thinks we may be able to put \$12,000 into the building fund. Abby added "We will let the congregation know about this effort and we are looking for congregants, and the Board, who could participate at this level. If we pay down this mortgage that frees things like building a school and all those things that are on our wish list." David asked "What are we presently spending on the mortgage?" Answer: \$7,816 dollars a month.

Abby said there will be a letter coming from the Rabbi to the congregation, and Sherill will be sending out Press Releases to the Jewish and general community. "We could get some really big energy behind us. The goal is to pay down the mortgage."

The Rabbi likes that this could be a message that "the Rabbi and the Congregation together paid off the mortgage". There was much discussion surrounding this issue.

Fundraising will continue to be for operating funds. David and M.G. think “the power of this giving could allow us to do so many things and tell a great story”. David then asked if there was a penalty to pay off the mortgage, Chip thought not, but would find out. He thinks the Board need to make a statement here, too. The goal is to try and pay off the mortgage in three years.

We will let the Rabbi’s letter lead us, and hope for this to come out before the High Holidays. Abby said “We will have a strategy meeting for the Executive Board”.

Liaison Committee- On behalf of Tracy, Abby reported that Tracy is seeking a third person and hopes to soon nail it down. Once finalized, Abby will send a letter to the congregation to let them know about the L.C. because there is a lot of chatter going around within and outside of Beth El. We want to give congregants an opportunity to air their concerns or suggestions. It was recommended that the letter not wait for the third person but to send it out as soon as possible.

Membership Campaign- Grace and Ron will be working on this. Abby shared that M.G. had floated an idea about membership akin to how his Golf Club memberships work. His thought process is that we put together an offering that new members (not former) have a thirty-day or sixty-day trial membership. We let them see if they like our synagogue and all that we offer. We would offer this after the High Holidays. They then would have an opportunity to join at a discount (3mos?) rate. We would have hosts and hostesses welcome new members and be the welcoming committee. Grace asked the Board had they also thought about offering to the HH ticket purchasers, that for an additional \$500, they could become members. It would be a one-time opportunity. “We have to continue to search out and look for new ways to attract members.” Donne,” loved the Shabbat dinners Gail did, and we paired up existing members with new members, it really worked well”. There was also a discussion of our emails being available to the general public. Neal shared the history about why the emails were private.

Karen asked if we should refer to membership or vote on it. Sherill asked for some time to know how they might be able to do it. Some discussion. Jacquie and Sherill need to find out if this is feasible. Once we get more information, then we can make a decision about this. Rachel suggested that the Membership Committee develop an overall campaign that includes all these factors, new ideas, PR, and budget.

Board Committee Chair Reports:

Sisterhood – Vickie reported that we are out there as evidenced by the Temple Sisterhood asking us to join them for a program, the Youth Group, Hadassah. “I feel we are being recognized and respected by the community. We will help with the High Holidays, organize the Break Fast, Sleichot ice cream, silver polishing, and more.”

Brotherhood – Reported by Ron Van, 8/9 dinner with the Rabbi. The Brotherhood will put together a basket of wine for the school’s Chanukah dinner.

Education -Donne reported that school starts in two weeks. We are asking different committee to make baskets for the school for the Chanukah dinner. We would also like the Board to contribute and restaurant gift cards in a basket. We want to reach out beyond the school and invite our congregants to attend.

Communications- Sherill requested that if you need anything publicized she needs it the first of the month. She already sent out the press info. for September.

Karen announced that she needs two people to chair the Social Action and the Caring Committees. Bobby Adler is the Library Chair, and Judy Chairs Adult Ed. Karen also asked which committees has a budget? Chip responded that Facilities has a budget, committees don't have budgets but have line items. This will be addressed at the next meeting.

Signage landscaping and lighting design- Rachel informed the Board how wonderful again, M.G. is. "He donated in-kind his electrician to take down the existing lighting and install solar-powered lights. The sign is no longer obstructed by the light. We tested it and it works! You know how we plant a tree in Israel, how about we "plant a plant" for our synagogue. We will be walking the sign with several landscapers to get bids, and forward to facilities."

Jacque has folders for each Committee that have information relevant to their committee. She was unable to be here because of her son's health.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m. The next meeting of the Board will be, September 6, at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachel Marcus-Hendry Mitchell

Rachel Marcus-Hendry Mitchell, Secretary