

TEMPLE AHAVAT SHALOM
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
July 20, 2010
MINUTES

Attendance:

Gail Karlin, Sheila Reback, Robin Mandel, Robert Cohn, Howard Schnee, Mel Birken, Ellen Pollack, Janice Schneider, Neil Bernstein, Steve Mermell, Lloyd Cutler, Marilyn Burman, Fran Krimston, Amy Corman, Sharon Janis, Phyllis Bass, Janice Berlin, Joe Blachman, Marc Zev, Bruce Hatkoff, Marcy Hilecher, Mike Thornhill, Esther Saritzky, Jennifer Kosoy, Robyn Blachman, Stephanie Howard, Jill Cullen, Barry Pearlman, Ken Miles, Lisa Kantor, Debby Lieber, Cantor Roher, Sally Lax, Cindy Cutler, Anita Hoch, Carol Stern, Carol Bizar-Morton, Arlene Stone, Karen Schnee, Addie Lupert, Elaine Gottesman, Alyce Caskey and Wendy Krowne

The meeting was called to order by Lisa Kantor at 7:35 PM. We recited the blessing. D'var Torah was led by Esther Saritzky.

Lloyd Cutler motioned to approve the minutes of the June board meeting. Gail Karlin seconded and the minutes were approved.

President's report was presented by Lisa Kantor:

Lisa introduced our new Cantor, Jennifer Roher (pronounced "Rower"). Cantor Roher noted that she is happy to have met so many of us and anxious to meet everyone else. After her first week, she told us that aside from the moving craziness, she is having a fabulous time here. She said, "It is a fabulous place. My first week was amazing." She feels like she has known members of the staff so much longer than a week because they have been so helpful, devoted to helping her, etc. She was impressed with the bar and bat mitzvah students and at how well prepared they are for their simchas. Sher, her husband, Ryan, and son, Elijah are so happy to be here and looking forward to working with us.

Halli Steinberg has taken a two-year contract, instead of the original 1-year contract.

Rabbi Lutz is on a much-needed vacation and emailed the following report:

Dear Friends,

I am sorry that I am unable to join you tonight, but Debbie and I are off celebrating our silver wedding anniversary this week and getting some much needed r&r. So, I offer from afar my Rabbi's report for this month.

First, yes I did break my hand. To be exact, the fifth metacarpal bone (which extends from your wrist to the first pinky joint). Contrary to all rumors, I did not hit anyone, hit a wall in anger or any other such thing. I did, unfortunately, in an expressive gesture, smack my hand into the top edge of a chair and inadvertently break the bone. So, I experienced Israel for the first time left handed!

And speaking of Israel, hopefully many of you followed our third, most wonderful and successful tour of Israel. We spent two glorious weeks touring the country and gaining a much clearer understanding of the complex array of issues that vex this very tiny country. We ate a great deal of hummus and celebrated the miracle that is the State of Israel. And, before leaving, Debbie and I began preparations and plans for 2012.

Third, a huge and warm welcome to Cantor Jen Roher, her husband Ryan and baby Elijah. I am so delighted to have them join our community and look forward to working with her over the coming year in her capacity as our interim Cantor. I look forward to joining her on the bima this Shabbat for our morning bat mitzvah.

Cantor Roher has been at TAS just over a week now and is quickly settling in, tutoring b'nai mitzvah, leading Shabbat worship and preparing for the High Holy Days. I know that she would love to meet each of you. I hope you will take the opportunity to introduce yourself and welcome her to our community.

As you know, due to the circumstances surrounding Cantor Linsky's retirement, we were unable to conduct a full search. That process will begin in earnest once again in several weeks as we look to bringing on board a permanent Cantor in July, 2011.

Finally, over the past few weeks, due to the generosity of the Confirmation class of 2009 we have been busy working on improving our sanctuary sound system. To quote from the letter recently sent to the families of the 2009 class:

So...what exactly has been done?

We targeted the most crucial areas – Clearer sound, with new microphones; Added more inputs to the sound system, through the addition of a new mixer; better feedback

suppression, through dynamics processors – all things that the entire congregation will benefit from, all year ‘round.

The system is still being tweaked and will continue to go through experimentation and testing over the next month as we prepare for the High Holy Days.

*I will be back in the office next week and look forward to seeing you then.
b'Shalom,*

Rabbi Barry M. Lutz, R.J.E.

Jill Cullen has arranged for a Solar Power Professional to report on the subject as regards our TAS school buildings:

He explained in layman's terms how panels capture and then convert energy so that it can be used to provide electricity. The utility company provides a meter that goes in both directions, positive and negative. The meter measures the amount of electricity that is generated by the solar system and the electricity goes to the power grid and we continue to use it as always. The meter will give the net result of what has been generated versus consumption. The utility company is giving incentives to encourage conversion to solar power. \$2.6 billion was given to all utility companies by the State to be distributed over 10 years and the incentive declines the closer we get to 2013. Besides the utility company incentives there are tax credits. But, the systems are very expensive, and the Temple would have to come up with the up front money.

He went on to share some of the nuances of the finances and a possible solution to the fact that non-profits don't pay taxes and, as a result, cannot take advantage of the tax credits.

This will be evaluated further and reported on in the months to come.

Sisterhood: Lisa distributed Robyn Blachman's 3 page power point summary of the Sisterhood amendment to their by-laws that allows non-TAS members to be members of Sisterhood, but they must pay higher dues, have no voting rights and may not serve on the Sisterhood board. No Temple member who quits the Temple may rejoin Sisterhood for two years. All unpaid dues or fees must be paid before anyone can join after the two year period.

To further clarify, these non-TAS member Sisterhood members would not have access to our clergy for life-cycle events or any other staff members or privileges of Temple membership.

Lisa circulated the following email from Rabbi Lutz on this subject:

Dear all,

Again, I am sorry that I cannot be with you to discuss this very important issue. The issue that has been raised goes far beyond Sisterhood and raises much larger issues about what it means to be a member of the TAS community and how that membership is expressed. This is not an easy issue - but rather one that is fraught with complexities and surrounded with a great deal of emotion.

The stance taken on this issue, I believe, extends beyond one auxiliary and addresses in a very fundamental way the functioning of other departments and auxiliaries in the congregation and their stance towards members and non-members who wish to participate in their groups. (For instance non-TAS members who want to join Men's Club, or, who want to join Jr. or Sr. TASTY)

Therefore, while the women of Sisterhood have already engaged in (and continue to) debate this issue that has touched so many nerves, I believe it is an issue that demands much more extensive research and further investigation. In fact, I believe that the emotion and passion surrounding this issue is EXACTLY the reason we need to take the time to more carefully consider what action the board should take at this time.

I would, therefore, urge the board to establish a task force to more fully understand the issue and the implications for our community in either approving or vetoing the recently established Sisterhood policy.

Rabbi Barry M. Lutz, R.J.E.

Lisa shared that in 2006 a task force discussed the benefits of membership, which revealed that there is not much that a non-member cannot do. How do we balance welcome with membership?

Lloyd Cutler would like to gain more information per Men's Club, etc. and table the discussion because of the larger issues. Stephanie Howard agrees that this is more like a tip of the iceberg to determine what the effects may be. Bruce Hatkoff is in favor of an analysis being done in order to get a long-term picture. Marilyn Burman agrees it's best to gain data in order to make an informed decision.

Howard Schnee suggests that with the number of guests at the meeting who came to share their point of view on this topic, we should limit the length of each person's comments.

If we set up a task force to evaluate on a temple-wide basis, how would this work from Robyn Blachman's point of view? She indicated that September is Sisterhood's open

membership period and the more members they have the more money, workers, and benefits the Temple derives. There are approximately 550 TAS member units, and 184 Sisterhood members with 40 active members. There are 20 to 30 women outside of TAS who, as reported by Robyn, are “passionately” interested.

Janice Berlin, a long time member of TAS, and an employee at Valley Beth Shalom (VBS) spoke to the Board in favor of the Sisterhood amendment. One of the points she thought was relevant to share is that the VBS Sisterhood and Men’s Club are open to non-members and that has been the case for over 9 years. In Janice’s opinion, it does not seem there are issues with that policy at VBS. Janice’s sister-in-law, a past, active member of TAS would like to return to TAS Sisterhood if this program is implemented.

The task force could begin their work, but they would not necessarily finish by September’s membership drive. Could Sisterhood put this amendment on hold? Jennifer Kosoy has an issue with turning it into a global issue. It was made clear that evaluating it globally would not result in the same decision being applied globally.

Ellen Pollack noted that the membership thrust is in September. Robyn said Sisterhood will proceed as usual with the membership drive.

Bruce Hatkoff suggested we consider bifurcating and allowing the amendment to stand this year and evaluating the results. ECEC currently allows non-members to be in ECEC. Sisterhood and Men’s Club are auxiliaries and ECEC is a school.

Procedurally, the TAS board’s only recourse is to veto, unless Sisterhood suspends or revokes the amendment.

Steve Mermell motioned that we form a task force to determine whether membership in auxiliaries or other activity units, including religious school and early childhood education by non-temple members is or is not in the best interest of the Temple. Bruce Hatkoff wants it inclusive of all units that have a membership component and he seconded the motion. At completion of analysis a report will be made to the Board.

Steve Mermell amended the motion to authorize the President to appoint the task force and that they be given direction to complete the assignment in all due haste but with no particular date.

Marilyn Burman agrees that we should view the issue globally, which should include the religious school and ECEC.

Janice Schneider sees education, religious school, ECEC, auxiliaries, etc. as very different.

We have all agreed that the intent is to be global.

Motion passed unanimously regarding the task force.

Dorothy Doberne questioned the validity of the vote at the Sisterhood meeting. She commented that notification of the emergency meeting was sent only by email, and an important issue should be sent by mail, too. Three elderly members did not get email, mail or phone call. 28 affirmative votes were the bare minimum required to pass, and it may have been decided differently, if all Sisterhood members were notified.

Phyllis Bass said that 45 years of precedent is being casually tossed aside. Tabling would be much more important than allowing the policy to move forward. Lisa said this Board has no power to do this. We can only veto if it is not in the best interest of TAS. Phyllis said that it was indicated we may be recruiting TRZ Sisterhood members and she believes it is bordering on unethical when TRZ has hired a new Rabbi and is having difficulties surviving. In the '70s and '80s we had cooperative programming with TRZ and NVJCC on the temple level.

Lisa knows that Sisterhood is not recruiting from TRZ, but we have members of TRZ coming to us, i.e. a confirmation student.

Fran Krimston indicated that the URJ and Temple have a policy that if you leave a temple owing money, you may not rejoin that temple or any other URJ temple until the arrears are paid in full.

Robyn Blachman said there are TRZ women who are interested in coming over because their grandchildren are here and they want to be involved. She went on to read from Ron Wolfson's book regarding how to be welcoming. 83% of Reform congregations in California have open membership to Sisterhood, according to Robyn.

Howard Schnee acknowledged the number of women at the meeting and all the information they have to share and asked how we would like them to share their opinions. Lisa suggested email.

Joe Blachman wants to share a parallel concern about the potential appearance of trying to recruit TRZ in TAS Sisterhood. Whether there might not be a deeper question as to whether our Gift Membership program is trying to get members from TRZ. Lisa indicated, absolutely not, the Gift Membership program is intended for unaffiliated families only.

Marilyn Burman asked why a special meeting was called. Robyn said it was about timing. And, May is the last meeting of their year, with no meetings during the summer, and it could not wait until September.

Low Hanging Fruit: Marc Zev said most of us have had children going through the religious school and one of the issues is that school lets out and there are lines of cars and kids are milling about. Wouldn't it be great if there was a place to hang out away from cars where they could see their parents drive up? Well, Alex Howard is doing his Eagle

Scout project and he would like to ask Board Members to donate to this project.

Fran Krimston commented on the danger that lurks in our parking lot after Hebrew School. She has observed children darting between cars and drivers pulling out of the parking/pick-up lane who have close calls with children. She suggests we have a cadre of volunteers (Shomrim) to act as traffic coordinators after Hebrew and Religious School.

Motion to adjourn at 9:30 by Jill Cullen and Robyn Blachman seconded.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Krowne
Recording Secretary