

Kesher Israel Board Meeting 1-8-2006

Attendees: Gary Winters, Al Altshul, Jerry Chapman, Jonathan Frenkel, Lisa Schreier, Elanit Rothschild, Dave Sloan, Debbie Rogal, David Barak, Leon Wieseltier, Ken Weinstein, Roz Singer.

1. Dvar Torah

It was noted that everyone liked the dvar torah from the rabbi by email.

2. Financial Report

There will be no financial report this month. It will be circulated by email.

3. Refurbishment Project

Our previous contractor, KadCon, was not responsive. So, we have met with Winmar (www.winmar.com) who are a local, reputable construction company. David Epstein, Bob Booer, and Gary Winters met with them, and have hired them on Shalom Baranes' recommendation. Winmar says that the project will be much shorter than the 4-6 months that KadCon was saying.

David Barak asked whether we could delay until after Purim. Gary said the subcontractors will be doing walkthroughs shortly and we'll know more after that. The plans are close to final, and Gary has copies to show people.

Regarding financing for the project, the letter to congregation has been drafted. The letter refers to a 250K goal. We have a combination of commitments, and money in the bank of \$50K. An anonymous donor will give the last \$50K, so our real target is about \$150K.

Should we put an assessment on the congregation? Gelfand suggested it. Gary suggested an assessment of 10% of dues for two years. Each family would pay an additional \$70 per year = \$140 total. Debbie agreed that a nominal assessment was a good idea. David Sloan agreed in concept, but pointed out that the total money raised would be around \$25K. Gary said that he wanted to be upfront about any assessment and include it in the congregational letter.

Al suggested that the emphasis in the letter should to be on giving in the near term, not the far term. We need the money now, so we don't draw the line of credit down (and incur interest).

Gary reminded the board that the capital goal was set at an amount which is beyond the cost of the renovations, because we need money for the rabbi's house and the bayit, and also to fund the building fund.

There was a resolution for a 10% assessment for two years. Leon Wieseltier seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously for the assessment.

Regarding the line of credit, Debbie pointed out that the board has approved a \$250K credit line to pay for renovations. The trustees need to sign for this. They agree to do what the board wants, but would prefer if the credit line was closer to the amount actually needed, or if the board would amend the resolution to show that they had only approved spending up to a certain figure, and going over would require additional approval. The trustees would like an additional layer of security.

Al Altshul said that they were already planning on a report, so he did not see the need. Jerry Chapman said that he thought it was fine for the board to authorize the president to draw up to a certain amount. Debbie suggested that the amount should be \$125K, and Gary agreed.

Debbie Rogal made a motion that the president is authorize to draw up to \$125K from the line of credit for the refurbishment project. David Barak seconded the motion. The board approved the motion unanimously.

There is a need to figure out the logistics of trustee signatures.

Regarding our displacement during renovations, Shana has been working with Francis Junior High School. The city is being slow in responding, but we're trying to get an answer. Hillel is a backup location.

4. Bayit II/Nursery School

The terms of the loan for Bayit II were such that the shul was required to make a \$100K principal payment in December 2005. None of us were aware of those terms. The theory behind it was that we would have raised money for it, and the terms would have been beneficial, but no efforts were made to raise quantities of money in that range. Michael Gelfand has renegotiated such that we have a deferral of the \$100K principal payment for a year – but that's a deferment, not a new mortgage.

Our options are to sell the building or renegotiate the mortgage. Gelfand's recommendation is to hold on to the building for the time being, for market reasons.

Regarding the nursery school, we have community opposition. Daria explained that we had original filed a special exemption request to open up a nursery school, and the opposition was largely based on traffic – 24 cars, etc. When we backed it down to 12 students, the traffic opposition looks like really nothing. We've made the decision to back down, but our lawyer thinks we should offer a *quid pro quo*, and ask the neighbors for their support on this. The reality is that there's lots of parking at around 8AM when minyan ends.

Any systematic study will prove to the BZA that we can support the parking, and we'll get the zoning we seek. However, the study will cost money, and we need board support to fund it. The feeling from the ANC was that we needed to postpone the meeting so that

we could do the traffic study. I met with Steve Peterson, who is a name in the world of traffic studies. He's well known by the BZA, and he does peer review – the study would cost about \$1000 (and he'll appear at the BZA); his usual fee is 5K.

The zoning hearing is Feb 21st, and the ANC meeting is Jan 31st.

David Barak asked whether a permit is needed for the study, but Daria answered that Peterson is licensed, and he wouldn't have suggested it if it were a problem.

Debbie Rogel inquired whether we have found out if we have enough space for the children in the single building. We thought before that the first building would have a big problem regarding space. Daria responded that the DC license requires 35 sq feet per child, and the downstairs can get us 10-12 kids. Some renovations will be required: fire-exit type doors, wheelchair access, and a few other things.

Jonathan asked whether we needed to answer the ultimate question before deciding to fund the traffic study. Gary said that he had some very serious concerns about the amount of space, and felt concerned about putting money into the project. He also is concerned about the logistics of having 10-12 2-4 year olds together in the single house. He said that we should make a judgment on this issue.

Daria said that if we're willing to pledge a moratorium on expansion for 4 years, we might be able to get something. Gary said he thought we could spend the \$1300 on the traffic study. Daria said that we could decide on logistics after the zoning issue is resolved (and won). She also said that the parents of the babies in the music group are supportive of the nursery school idea.

Leon said that he has spoken to some neighbors, and he thinks the opposition is different than just statistical. Based on his son's needs, he questions whether the Bayit will be adequate space for their needs. We don't want to find that the nursery school is taking up unexpected resources and puts us into a hole.

Jerry asked if we get zoning for the current bayit, and then we're able to expand, would we need to start from scratch, or would we be precluding ourselves from ever getting zoning for the next building? Daria said it wouldn't be starting from scratch, but it would require a new hearing. By then, the neighbors who fear that it may impact them will either have learned that it DOES impact them, or that it doesn't. She pointed out that if we needed to ask permission to hold minyan at the shul – 30 men showing up for 45 minutes – that would be opposed too.

Gary said we need to be realistic about what we can do with these properties. He thought the moratorium would be acceptable because Bayit II will need to eventually be sold. Daria said that the moratorium will help win over neighbors, but we could probably win without doing it. Jonathan recommended against making any commitments.

Gary expressed a consensus on funding the traffic study. Leon added that any further expenditures will be contingent on a board decision to open the school. Gary agreed. We would have a lot of expenses if we decided to open the school. David Barak inquired whether a motion was required, but Gary said a motion was not needed to spend money.

Daria requested that the Rabbi speak at the ANC meeting.

Elanit asked whether we need to have a discussion about the lack of communication regarding the loan and how it was handled. She expressed that it was a breach in trust and a breach in responsibility. We spent a lot of time of money on getting it, and we're now in a bad position.

Gary said that the matter of the terms of the loan is not really the issue. Loans can generally get renegotiated. The problem was really the communication problem. If the loan can get turned into a regular mortgage, then it's fixed – if not, then there's a big problem. We shouldn't have major transactions like this handled by a single individual in the future.

There was general consensus that if the loan can't be fixed, we need to sell.

5. Other items

It was noted that our fundraising banquet is confirmed for April 2.