

Kesher Israel Board Meeting Minutes – November 12, 2006

Attendees: Rabbi Freundel, Gary Winters, Roz Singer, Al Altschul, Jesse Mendelson, Elanit Rothschild, Dave Sloan, Seth Opert, Gamliel Kronemer, Marty Ramirez, David Barak, Jerome Chapman, Elana Lederman, Isadora Binder, Baruch Fellner, David Epstein.

1. Rabbi Message
 - a. Dvar Torah – Splitting community work starts with Yisro and Moshe, and the criteria is that they should be “chachamim” – Avot says who is wise? Someone who “sees,” but that could mean either “prognosticator” or “extrapolator to the future.” Kesher has hit a big growth spurt – lots of new members, all Shabbat minyanim full most of the time. We hit one of these in the 1990s as well, and then real estate went through the roof. Now, real estate is coming down, and we need to do some serious planning for what we want to do for all the people. We need to have a group of people to discuss prospects, options, etc and come to a decision for what to do – even if it’s nothing.
 - b. Conversion Report → Conversion committee (“GPS”) has finished preliminary work and the report goes to RCA executive committee on Wednesday 11/15, and Rabbi Freundel thinks it will pass, and then it will go to the whole RCA committee and then the chairman, who hasn’t been helpful. Rabbi will meet with him again in December and hope it will go better.
2. Baruch Fellner’s Outreach to Leisersohn (next door)
 - a. For 15 years, the first choice for expansion has been to put the Leisersohn house and the shul on the same level and push pews back into the house. Shelly Weisel and Baruch Fellner reached out to the two sons (George and Walter) 7-8 years ago and had a very open discussion, and made offers to buy an alternative house for her, but she is very attached to her house. She planted a tree years ago for her late husband and she doesn’t want to leave that tree. That discussion ended with them telling B. Fellner that we would be first in line, but they wouldn’t tell her and wouldn’t explore it until she moved out. She moved out 3 months ago, and Fellner left a message for the sons but did not receive a return phone call. He will continue gently badgering until they call back.
3. October 2006 minutes approved.

4. Welcome committee
 - a. Jesse and Seth raised some issues regarding the welcome committee, and the following were agreed to by the board:
 - i. Rabbi makes calls to new members
 - ii. Jesse will assign each new member a buddy on the board and a meal, and that person follow up with them a few weeks later to see how things are going, etc
 - iii. There will be new Welcome business cards with people's names and emails on them, and will include "Ask me about Keshar" to get around the halachic concerns
 - iv. Sisterhood will take the welcome packet from the office, and send packets and Sisterhood welcome letter to new members
 - v. Community lunches can be planned every 15-20 new members, in addition to New Faces Lunch every year
 - vi. Green buttons will be given out to board members and some others – "Ask Me About Keshar." Seth Opert and Roz Singer are coordinating this.
5. Jesse left to go watch the Steelers crush the Saints. There is much weeping and wailing over Jesse's absence.
6. Long Range Planning discussion continues:
 - a. David Epstein indicated that his daughter, who is a real estate agent, will alert us if the Leisersohn house goes on the open market, but expressed skepticism about the amount of utility in the upstairs space that can be gained by joining with the Leisersohn house.
 - b. One issue mentioned was a remote branch minyan of Keshar, and D. Epstein expressed skepticism about the ability to keep a remote branch minyan under the Keshar Israel umbrella.
 - c. The Rabbi stated that some branches of shuls succeeded and some have failed, and encouraged formation of a committee to examine that and other options.
 - d. Gary reminded the board that our funds are tied up in Bayit II, and that we likely would need to take the money out (by selling the house) in order to make any acquisition of the Leisersohn.
 - e. B. Fellner stated that the Leisersohn house is the consensus decision for expansion.

- f. Elana Lederman said that growing families are going to have to leave Keshet, and endorsed the possibility of a graduate community for Keshet somewhere in the area.
- 7. Carlebach Minyan location
 - a. There was discussion concerning moving the Carlebach minyan upstairs, the seating arrangements, and the options for moving the main minyan either downstairs or to the Bayit. There was a recommendation for an alternating schedule for a short time if the change is made. The observation was made that the Carlebach minyan is made up of many regular shul members, as well as those who attend solely for Carlebach. The board agreed that we would have a discussion at the Carlebach minyan as to whether people have strong views on the move.
- 8. Financial report
 - a. Al Altschul reported that we have collected close to \$160,000 so far this fiscal year. He will have a better feel for the financial direction in December, but collections are on pace. We are on target for our budget, but fundraisers are crucial to the long term success of the budget.
- 9. Security
 - a. Dave Sloan gave a security report. The panic buttons turned out not to be feasible in the entire system without additional expense. A more extensive proposal including fire and burglary protection will be submitted for a Homeland Security grant with the assistance of Roger Breeze. If we are unsuccessful in obtaining it, a new proposal for increased cost will be made to the Board.
- 10. Renovations
 - a. Progress is being made on the renovations. There have been delays on the lighting, the decorative glass over the ark, and the remaining row of chairs in the women's section, but many of the lingering items have been addressed. \$75,000 must still be raised to complete the project. Individual solicitations continue.
- 11. Mailings and Publications.
 - a. Gamliel Kronemer objected to the disorganization of the synagogue mailings. He encouraged the sending of cover letters when mailings go out. This will look more professional and requires little effort to improve. We discussed bringing back the shul bulletin, smaller and less frequently, containing letters from the Rabbi and President, information about children's events, life cycle events, etc. Gamliel volunteered for the editing task, but would not be willing to chase material.
 - b. Seth Opert brought up the possibility of printing contributor thank-yous. Questions came up regarding the execution of an updated and accurate list.

If organization was feasible, many board members agree that it would be an encouragement to bring in more donations.

- c. David Epstein recommended a column for Keshet stories and anecdotes from members.
- d. The newsletter would include a section about the programs being run by other groups within the shul, such as the Green Group, Sisterhood, etc.
- e. Gamliel encouraged sending out a binder that includes calendar, halachot, and becomes a repository for all mailings and updates. New members would receive a full copy, others would get updates regularly. Ads could appear on dividers and binders. The Sisterhood will distribute. Logistics will be coordinated outside the board.

12. End of tax year donation letter (to go out shortly) will include a pitch for appreciated securities with appropriate contact information.

Meeting adjourned.