

Kesher Israel Board Meeting Minutes – December 11, 2005

The following board members were in attendance: Rabbi Barry Freundel, David Epstein, Gary Winters, Elanit Rothschild, Jonathan Pincus, Jonathan Frenkel, Baruch Fellner, David Barak, Natasha Nadel, David Sloan, Ken Weinstein, Lisa Schreier, Evonne Marzouk, and Al Altschul.

1. The meeting began with a dvar Torah from Rabbi Barry Freundel about fundraising.

2. We approved the following new members:

Candace Nachman

Galit Sarfaty

Erin Lebi Lisitza and David Lisitza

Gordon and Myra Gondos

Adam Saunders

Kim David Lexner and Geraldine Lexner Bollag

Guy and Rachel Shafran

David Mordechai Hollander

Regarding membership, it was noted that the system of having new members be invited to the homes of nearby board members has broken down. Natasha Rosenstock said the Sisterhood could provide the names of new members. It was noted that there are about 70 new members over the last four months.

3. Budget

As of the middle of December, about half of the member families have not paid their dues yet. Statements were mailed last week for dues and other charges. Calls will begin for dues at the beginning of the next quarter. It was noted that the Kol Nidre fundraising was low, whereas dues were near budget already. Disbursements are on track for five months into the fiscal year.

4. Fundraising

We have discussed two dates for the shul fundraiser, March 19 or April 2. April 2 is near Pesach, but Gary thinks that since it is more than a week before the holiday, it could be an acceptable date. It was noted that Ken Saks will be married on April 2.

It was announced that David and Deb Sloan will be the honorees for the event.

Board members who would like to be involved in planning the event should speak to Roz Singer.

5. Refurbishment

There are three aspects to the proposed refurbishment. The foyer and bathroom work is ready to begin work, but the contracting firm, Kadcon, has not returned calls. We cannot work with them, so we are looking for another firm to do the work.

Regarding the kitchen, it was determined that the proposed \$100K for kitchen work would not help the people who work in the kitchen, and might cause problems, so we have decided not to go ahead with this aspect of the refurbishment. Part of the capital campaign will be used to upgrade the Bayit kitchen and other upgrades to the Bayit. We can also improve the shul kitchen, without the full renovation proposed.

Regarding the upstairs, we are close to final decisions. We will not be changing the windows because of continuing concerns with heat, light, and the halachic requirements. The Gottesman family has agreed to trust our judgment on this. Upstairs work will begin after Aryeh Mellman's Bar Mitzvah.

We still need to raise \$250K for the remaining work. We need 25 donors to give \$10-20K, and others according to their means.

It was noted that architectural fees are running higher than expected. Baruch Fellner cautioned that they should not be approximately 10-14% of the full cost. However, there were fees for design of the kitchen and windows, even though we will not be using that work. We are working with a project manager, Reich Management, to help keep costs down. They will give their time pro bono and serve as an advocate for now. Later, we could hire them. They may also help us find a new contractor.

The process downstairs will take 4-6 weeks, during which time we can still come through the front door. We will always have access to the downstairs of the shul for daily minyan and hashkama.

We are looking for a space to be used during the upstairs renovations. We will not be able to use the Four Seasons or Dumbarton Place. There will be a shul Bat Mitzvah that needs to be considered for June 17. We will also need a different location for Purim. We are discussing different options.

One alternative space is the Francis Junior High School at 24th and N. Shanna Winters has been discussing with the school administration the use of the building for Friday night and Saturday. Rabbi Freundel asked that he be included in this conversation, because he might have influence as a clergy member. The goal would be to keep Carlebach and hashkama minyan at the shul, downstairs, with the main service moved to the alternate location.

Another option would be to have two different Friday night services, one in Foggy Bottom and one in Georgetown. (In the past, we have had "local" Friday night minyanim without damaging the community.) Hillel services could be used, but they are at a fixed time (6 pm) all year, which could pose a halachic problem. For Shabbos morning, Hillel is available and inexpensive and seats 250. However, it's far from Georgetown.

Due to the challenge of having three services, David Barak suggested having hashkama and the main service consecutively, with main service beginning at 9:30.

Purim morning could not be held at the school. The shpiel also requires a lot of space. There is a dinner and drash before Purim which also needs to be considered. We will wait to see what Shanna works out with the school.

6. Capital Campaign

We have gone through the Credit Commission and we will sign for a line of credit before the end of the year. The rate is prime plus 1%. We will not be charged until we take money out. We have raised \$50K from the community toward the \$250K so far.

Roz Singer explained that we will talk to individuals for high ticket donations first. Roz will go community-wide for the fundraiser. We'll be asking for regular contributions and extra commitments this year, which can be given over time. Donations for this campaign should be designated for the "capital campaign" on donation information. We will ask everyone to make some contribution.

Regarding naming, we should have a list of "builders of Keshet Israel" since there is little left for naming opportunities. The rabbi asked whether Sam Bregstone could be memorialized with a naming opportunity. There is little left in the money he donated, approximately 40K and a house that we are supposed to get the proceeds from. (This needs to be discussed with Mort Press so that we can protect our assets.)

7. Nursery School

There was a community meeting regarding the school, with significant opposition and significant support. There are concerns regarding traffic and congestion at the drop-off time. This may be addressed by arranging for a drop-off in front of the shul, with people coming down 27th St. and not blocking 28th St. Rabbi Freundel said that these solutions will show we are being responsive.

We need a link on our website for community information, describing who we are and what we do. Community members want to know more about us.

David Barak encouraged using the vehicle of community papers such as the Georgetown Current.

The plan has been scaled back, and the hearing put off. It was asked what has been spent for the nursery school so far, but it is only fees in the hundred dollar range for the application. The attorney has been working with us on a pro-bono basis so far.

It is probably beyond our ability to open the school this September.

Daria Fane wants parents to write letters saying, "We are considering using the school, and we would walk our children to get there."

8. Programming

Justice Steven Breyer will have a dialogue with Leon Weiseltier on January 15 at the shul. We will be using full publicity for the event. Gary Winters said that he would publicize the event to law blogs.

We discussed the cost of the event and agreed that there should be a lower-cost benefit for Keshet Israel members. We discussed the price of \$50 non-members and \$25 members, but settled on \$30 non-members and \$15 members. One option is for members to have until January 5 to sign up, and after that, open to all, but we opted not to do this because we'd like to get all publicity out immediately.

We would like to have a high-ticket patron reception before the event as a fundraiser. We need to confirm that it is acceptable for Justice Breyer to attend. It can be held at someone's home, an exclusive group of fifty or less. Justice Breyer could provide a copy of his book, there could be food from Dahan, etc. It was suggested to hold this event at Barry and Gayle Schochet's house. If not, Jonathan Pincus offered the use of his home with a small limo-bus transportation to the shul for the event. Baruch Fellner said that fifty people is too many and it should be a smaller group.

We should get people to sign in and give their emails at the event registration.

9. Good and Welfare

Roz Singer noted that she will speak at the JCC NVA regarding Modern Orthodoxy at the end of February. If we sponsor and promote the event, Keshet Israel members can come at the member rate, and they will give us a small donation. There is no cost to us.

Lisa Schreier said that the second round for toddler music class is filling up, and the class is paying for itself.

The board wished a mazel tov to Natasha Nadel (formerly Rosenstock), who was married to Scott Nadel last week.