

Kesher Israel Board Meeting Notes - July 11, 2004

1. The meeting opened with a **Dvar Torah** from the Rabbi about the responsibilities vested in the board by the congregation.
2. **New members** Yah-el Har-el, David Levin, and Alan and Sharon Weinstein were approved.
3. **The President made an appointment to the board, Elanit Rothschild.** Elanit was accepted by unanimous approval.
4. **David Epstein was confirmed as the new trustee,** since Louis Mayberg will be leaving this position.

5-6. Discussion of Budget

The Board discussed the final budget numbers from 2003-04. Last year we raised \$27,000 more than we spent, which was an excellent fundraising year. The spring banquet for the rabbi may be hard to match. New numbers for next year reflect changes from last year. For example, the amount for family membership is based on current and incoming families, including those families that are leaving. Additional members will add to this amount.

For the 2004-05 budget, it was noted that the education fund has increased both in receipt and expense. That is because education has begun to require a bigger budget for larger honoraria. The Gelfands have increased the funds for the education fund in honor of Michael's mother, in order to keep the number of programs the same for this year.

We discussed creating a glossy brochure for programming which can be used to promote our events, not only education, but the shul in general. David Barak is willing to collect a calendar of events for this. All programming groups should send David dates for upcoming programs for this brochure.

The rabbi expressed his concern that the website does not look competitive with other shuls or groups in DC. Roz Singer has been working on the site with Matt Horowitz. We discussed the current capacity of the web site, and we are able to do much more than we are currently doing with the capacity we have. Many people in the shul have this expertise and can build a better site. David Sloan knows who they are. Heather Zomer agreed to look into it and report back at the next meeting.

David Barak reminded us that he can set up an "@kesher.org" alias for anyone who runs a group or has a leadership role in the synagogue. The alias will forward to a regular email account. This helps with looking professional. Contact him if you'd like to set up an alias.

David Sloan pointed out that for next year's budget, there is no programming outside of education funds. This means that when there are ideas for other programs, the leaders have to beg for funds. We should track costs for other programming this year so that we can budget for it next year. We should all send upcoming program ideas to David Barak for the "glossy brochure" and he will compile a list for next month.

Debbie Rogal cautioned that the education programs are not to be brought for board approval. The endowment agreement requires that a budget be proposed to the board and once that is approved, as part of the overall operating budget for the year, programming is agreed on by the committee, which includes the Gelfands and the institute chair (currently Debbie). One question is whether all the educational programs should be "intellectual" or whether some of them should be more "popular."

David Barak will remind us of ongoing programs at next meeting so we can see if there are any gaps. We agreed to begin a discussion about shul programming at the next meeting.

7. Proposed House Purchase

Barry Shochet explained that we had retained a real estate agent and put in a bid. There is another buyer who has also put in a bid, but our bid is higher. Our bid is the asking price, which is \$1.1 m. Norman Jemal has looked at the structure of the house and says that any construction can be done to it. It will take 90-120 days to close on the house. If we purchase it, there is no contingency. It is ours.

We discussed a possible financing plan, based on \$400 k from the trustees and \$100 k available in the Breakstone fund. Michael Gelfand's proposal would be to find 10-15 people in the community to make anchor commitments. The remainder could be put into a mortgage and assessed against the members through membership funds. The interest on the mortgage would be \$30-40,000 per year.

Concerns were raised about using the trustee money and whether that would endanger funds for the cemetery. We were assured that funding for the cemetery is being paid back by the shul and is almost repaid. The intention would be to pay back the trustee funding for the house, as well.

Questions were raised about whether this project would change the construction priorities for the shul and what would be the use of the shul, also would it make the Bayit inaccessible for a period of time?

There is also a basement apartment in the house. If we rented the house, we could easily get

\$4000/mo. This could offset the cost of mortgage or could help us pay for the mortgage while we are deciding what to do with the house. Once we were ready to use it, perhaps we could have a full-time rabbinic intern live in the basement apartment.

Baruch Fellner said there is no interest from the previous donor, who felt disappointed by the response from the community last time. He also expressed concerns that the acquisition did not help solve the shul's main needs for additional davening and Kiddush/social space.

David Sloan said that the carrying costs for buying and selling the house (if we decide not to use it) could be approximately \$100 k. The question is, are we willing to risk that amount in order to possibly take advantage of an opportunity.

Debbie Rogal said the unmet needs raised at the annual meeting were no place for our kids, need for a place other than the social hall for AV, need for a place for both the learners' service and childcare on high holidays.

Al Altschul said that if we are committed to staying at 28th and N, we need to look seriously at this property. The people on the board will need to commit time to develop plans and a possible exit strategy if needed.

Gary Winters said that he felt that doubling the space of the Bayit would not meet our unmet needs. He would be more inclined to buy it if we could really support a nursery school. This might encourage families to stay and to move in.

Rabbi Freundel said that buying the building could allow for the possibility of things like a nursery school, additional evening classes, 2 kiddushes. He thought it was worth the risk.

Jerry Chapman said his strongest doubt was whether we can move to a full plan. He thought it was worth doing and building contiguous properties in the neighborhood. He is willing to participate.

Leon Wieseltier said his gut is to grab the house, but he is suspicious because he doesn't want mindless expansion. There is the challenge of the need to buy immediately and the need to plan thoughtfully. Once we get it we have to evaluate whether we can really use it.

Gary committed to asking Michael what commitments we can round up. Jerry Chapman committed to contribute \$25 K per year, and felt sure he would not be the only one.

There was general consensus that a nursery school is the only use worth it that we see at this time. To actually have a nursery school we will need to consider zoning, staff, maintenance of

building, etc. This was explored before, and for under 2-year olds there was the problem that we need to get cribs on wheels into building. More likely OK for 3-4 year olds. Need a sprinkler, wider doorways. Steps in front and back were an issue. There is an existing report that we should use, Hadass put together, Debbie Rogal has the information. Gail Weiss can ask someone from the Dumbarton nursery school about whether the space is feasible. We have only a few days to make a decision, or the house will be gone.

Jonathan Frenkel made a motion that 1) the board authorize signing the contract, 2) a funding committee (Mort Press, Barry, Michael, etc) come back to the board to recommend how to fund, 3) another committee (David Barak, Barry, Jerome, Michael) report back within 90 days regarding options for using space available – including the option of the nursery school AND the option of not using the house.

We agreed that there would be the serious possibility that we will decide in good faith that we can't use the space.

This three-part motion passed with 12 in favor and 1 opposed.

We agreed that the message to the community is: we had an opportunity to expand our space, a decision needed to be made immediately, there was a low financial risk to the investment, if we can't come up with a plan we can reverse over a short time. A letter from Gary to the shul is needed immediately.

The committee should hold an open house to discuss possibilities with the congregation.

In addition to the space we've discussed, Milton Gottesman wants to make a contribution to improve the upstairs, he would also pay fees. This is a possibility for an aesthetic improvement upstairs, hopefully in the fall.

Shalom Baranes also has discussed the extension into the courtyard, will continue to discuss as part of extension of space.

8. Other business

Debbie Rogal reported that the Theater Party fundraiser raised net revenues of \$5318.40. (Accounting attached - DR Report.doc)

We discussed the next board meeting. We can't have it August 8, as planned. Gary will send out possible dates for the next meeting, possibly on a weeknight.