

Kesher Israel Board Meeting Minutes – November 13, 2004

Attendees: Gary Winters, Rabbi Freundel, Michael Gelfand, Jonathan Frenkel, David Barak, Debbie Rogal, Evonne Marzouk, Baruch Fellner, Elanit Rothschild, David Epstein, Jonathan Pincus, Leah Mendelsohn, Al Altschul, Roz Singer

1. Outreach for people new to the community

Jesse Mendelsohn has taken on the role of outreach for people who are new to the community. It has been suggested to have a lunch at the shul for new members and people who are new to the community, possibly on December 18. Board members will contribute to the lunch, a \$20 minimum and then whatever you can afford.

All board members should be on the Kesherfirst email list, and should invite new members to meals. Jesse will send lists so that we can invite people, as well.

2. Mikvah update

The new contractor has made great progress and the Mikvah is very close to being done. The contractor says it will take another month to finish all the work. People can take walk-throughs if they are interested.

3. Financial Report

The report shows collections through the end of October. We have collected approximately half of our income for the year, which is on track with previous years. We must continue this pace of collections in order to get our income for the full year.

The eruv cost is running higher than usual for the year, as a result of construction with RFK stadium. We have asked the DC Minyan to contribute to the eruv. We do not expect them to give a major contribution.

We bought a copier, which was a high one-time cost but should greatly reduce our printing costs, and also administrative staff time spent running to the printer.

We have replaced the phone system in the shul, and David Barak is re-doing the system so that we will have mailboxes and DSL.

4. Approval of September and October Minutes

We agreed to do this by the internet, and to give everyone a week to enter comments, then another 2-3 days for approval.

5. Evening Minyan

It has been very difficult to get evening minyan since the clocks changed. Visitors are getting a bad impression of the shul.

We discussed many possible options for improving evening minyan attendance. The rabbi suggested having minyan coordinators, one leader per night, to bring their friends and get commitments from people to attend. Gary volunteered to be a captain for

Tuesday nights, and the Rabbi volunteered to be a captain for another night (not Monday).

We discussed whether it might be appropriate to change the time of the minyan, and agreed to send out a quick straw poll to see if we could find a better time.

The rabbi agreed to make it a priority in his speaking, to stress how important it is for people to come.

It was proposed that we agree to a “sense of the board” resolution that each member is strongly encouraged to come, and to bring a male if you are female.

Jonathan Pincus offered to sponsor pizza on Thursday nights, the hardest night to get a minyan. This is to be called the “Pincus Pizza Minyan.”

5. Needs Survey

The overall response to the needs survey was 20%, a representative sample. The number of parents was relatively low. We did not do follow up calls or urge people to respond; this was for people who cared enough to answer.

There was no groundswell of support for a nursery school, so if we go ahead with the project, it will need to start small and be sold. That doesn't necessarily mean people wouldn't support the idea if it became a reality.

There was a clear desire for:

- increased rabbinic programming,
- a larger social hall,
- an improved kitchen,
- a rabbi's office,
- better coat rooms and
- improved bathrooms.

Gary pointed out that we can't make major physical improvements if we put our energy and resources into developing the new Bayit into a nursery school.

6. Nursery School Committee Report

There is still no closing date for the Bayit, but it will be before December 31. We have drawings from Nir Buras (an architect and member of the shul who was in attendance at the meeting) for how to use the space available. The number one priority is to get an income stream to pay a mortgage. Gary requested that Michael Gelfand work with our real estate agent or make other arrangements to get a renter for the space soon after the closing. We'd like not to have a lengthy gap between closing and renting. The only way that a gap may be acceptable is if we want to start work on the building immediately, to open the nursery school this fall.

David Barak, on behalf of the committee, said that the committee report was not quite ready. David then asked the board to clarify a few issues. He said the committee's view is that it may be possible for the school to begin in fall 2005 if the school is a part of the shul. The general sense of the board was that the board is willing to have the school be part of the shul if the issue of joint liability can be addressed. Apparently it is a common practice for schools to begin as part of shuls.

The board also expressed a general sense that it is willing to have the school pay less than market rent to Keshet Israel, at least in the beginning, in order to make the school viable. David Barak said that the committee's view was that if the school had to pay market rent to the shul, it would not be financially viable.

Concerns were raised about the synagogue's ability to manage the project from a financial perspective, and about whether having the nursery school connected to the shul would become a "financial albatross."

We agreed to have a separate evening meeting to discuss the report and potential scenarios. The potential scenarios include: holding the building and renting it out; using the building for a school; and using the building for another purpose. Board members should make every effort to attend this evening meeting.

The board requested that the committee use the experience of others in the community, such as the Shomrei Emunah synagogue, and Sue Koss from the Jewish Primary Day School.

7. Winter Fundraiser

We discussed the possible location and honorees for the annual shul fundraiser. In terms of location, some people did not like the 6th and I shul last year because they couldn't sit down. The cost of the Hyatt is prohibitive. We may try to take advantage of the great buildings in DC, such as the Supreme Court Building, the State Department, the Commerce building. We don't know if these buildings were explored last year as possibilities. The venue should be handicapped accessible.

For possible honorees, we discussed Louis and Manette Mayberg, and Al Moses. Herman Wouk is not an option this year.

The Sisterhood had suggested having a silent auction as part of the event.

We discussed who from the board or shul might be able to coordinate this. One suggestion was Mordechai Lebenberg.

8. Other issues

Shalom Baranes has not met with Norman Jemal to set the "shul improvements" project in motion. We will give them another week or two to meet, and in the meanwhile Gary will check with Barry Schochet, who was the primary contact for this project.

The new directory of members will be sent to the printer this week, and then mailed out to members.

The rabbi raised the issue that at the end of the month, the term of the president of the OU ends. All the people who were there when we left the OU are gone now. The rabbi suggested that we consider re-joining. There are benefits to being part of the OU:

- As an Orthodox synagogue, we should be part of a synagogue body.
- There has been a strain on the OU intern program as a result of our leaving the OU.
- Keshet Israel is viewed as an important synagogue in the world, and we should be able to have influence on the OU through our membership.

The rabbi said that the OU now has safeguards in place to prevent this from happening again. We could make a statement about why we were rejoining.

We agreed to discuss this issue at the next meeting.