

*Strategic Committee on Rabbinical Staffing*

COMMUNITY FORUM

November 13, 2007

*MEETING NOTES*

A. Welcome

Good Evening. We certainly appreciate everyone coming to this important Community Forum; the first being sponsored by the Strategic Committee on Rabbinical Staffing.

Obviously, that is a mouthful; so what does it really mean?

Well, our purpose tonight is to make sure everyone knows exactly what it means.

My name is Mark Schindel, and as the appointed Chair of the Committee, I will be the moderator for this evening's forum.

Everyone should have a packet of information:

- Agenda
- Ground Rules
- Committee Report to the Board on Nov 6<sup>th</sup>
- Committee's Charter & Action Plan

B. Before we get into it, let me just go over the Agenda

First we have some housekeeping items:

- Introductions of the Committee members
- Our Ground Rules for the meeting

Next a brief review of what we want to accomplish tonight

Then, I will provide an overview of our Committee's objectives and plan to accomplish those objectives; information you have in your packet. Although, we have shared this information with the Rabbi and Board President and Vice President, ultimately it is the response by you, the Community, that we need to satisfy.

The majority of the time has been set aside to allow you to then ask questions or offer helpful suggestions that might improve our approach. Now, just to let you know about the protocol for how we plan to handle this comment stage. We are going to try a technique that has been used at other formal meetings. Anyone who has a question or wants to offer a suggestion, will line up at the podium; and we will simply go through the line, giving each person their opportunity. The only provisions are that you follow the Ground Rules, keeping your questions and comments short and concise, as well as stick to our topic, which tonight is the Committee's objectives and plan. We will have someone recording that information so that we capture the important points.

Finally, we will have a brief wrap-up and go over any next steps.

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1. Introductions

This Committee was chosen by the Board. They were looking for people who had the time and energy to do the difficult task of evaluating and assessing the congregation's desired level of Rabbinical staffing based on needs, wants, and cost factors. They wanted a diverse mix of older and newer members, men and women, with young children and without. Most importantly, though, the right temperament for good communications skills, and the ability to commit to a lot of work in a relatively short time frame. I am sure there are many in the congregation that would fit those criteria; but they happen to select us. In just our first month of planning, we have eight group meetings. Although scheduled for about 1 to 1-1/2 hours, they have usually gone for 2 or 2-1/2 hours. I think we have a great, hard-working group that will get the job done; but ultimately, we will need the contributions and involvement from the whole Community to make this successful. One important factor which this Committee is absolutely committed to is being open, honest, and transparent in our work and communications. We hope you will see that clearly demonstrated tonight.

Now, let's meet the Committee:

- **Mark Schindel** - I have the privilege of being the Chair of this Committee (and target if you have any concerns). My wife Kathy and I have been in Bend and part of this congregation for about 4-1/2 years now. We have three older daughters, ages 23, 28 & 30, out on their own (more or less), so no children in Sunday or Hebrew school. Generally, we try to help out in the Community in ways we can. My wife has been the Membership chairperson, and is now the Secretary on the Board; and you probably see her weekly e-mail updates.
- **Laura Fritz** - I moved to Bend 2.5 years ago from the Bay Area with my family, but I'm a native Oregonian. I have three children ages 12, 10, and 6. I am on the Board as a member at large and also on the shul's Education committee.
- **Lester Friedman** - JCCO Member since January 1999; 2.5 yrs JCCO Secretary, 3 yrs JCCO President, 2 years on the JCCO Board as Past-President, 1 year JCCO Board Member-at-Large (8.5 years total on Board). Central Oregon Community College Budget Committee, 5-years (Chair 3 years); Bend Police Chief Citizens Advisory Committee; Central Oregon Chapter of the Oregon Housing Alliance; Central Oregon Association of Realtors Board of Directors; State Director, Oregon Association of Realtors representing Central Oregon.
- **Dawn Derman** - married to Michael Derman. We have been a member of JCCO for over 13 yrs. I taught Sunday school for over 9 yrs.
- **David Multz** - I was an elementary school principal in the Miami-Dade School District. After moving to Bend, I became Sales Manager at a local auto dealership. My wife, Arlene, and I have been members of the JCCO for about 11-1/2 year. I was the first JCCO Membership Director to hold a Board seat. I have volunteered many hours at Shalom Bayit, primarily involving the garage sales that we used to hold.

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*MEETING NOTES*

- **Dan Fishkin** - My wife, Laurel, and I moved to Bend this August from Los Angeles. We have an eight year old son, Jesse, who is in second grade at High Lakes Elementary and attends Sunday school at Shalom Bayit. Having a vibrant Jewish community was pivotal to our decision to move to Central Oregon. Our son attended Jewish Day School in Los Angeles starting with “Mommy and Me” through first grade. My wife, Laurel, and I are both attorneys. Laurel no longer practices and has been a stay at home Mom focusing on raising our son for the last eight years. I practiced law in Los Angeles for the last twenty years. I currently am an independent consultant representing various clients in California. Laurel and I have always been very involved as volunteers in Jesse’s school and our former synagogue, where Laurel served on the Board of Directors of the Sisterhood.

2. Ground Rules

Now, before we get into the meat of our meeting (I guess in this shul, I should say into the heart of our meeting), I just want to go over some Ground Rules. I realize these may seem rather formal and unnecessary, but I think they will help insure we have good, productive sessions. A copy of these Ground Rules is included in your packets, as well as being posted on the wall. Basically, there are TWO main rules:

- We need to be respectful (of each other, and of following the rules of the meeting)
- We need to stay on topic

Tonight our topic is the work and plan of this Committee, so we will confine our questions and comments strictly to that subject. I understand that with a nice, captive audience, some of you may be quite tempted to bring up other burning issues – such as what color we should paint these walls or which melodies should we use in the service or other issues. However, I respectfully ask you to resist the temptation, and stick with this program tonight. We all thank you.

*Strategic Committee on Rabbinical Staffing*

COMMUNITY FORUM

November 13, 2007

*MEETING NOTES*

3. Why we are here

As we have alluded to already, we are here to personally explain what our Committee is about (and NOT about), and to go over our plan to accomplish the objectives set out for us and this congregation.

Over seven years ago, a small, struggling Jewish Community here in Central Oregon, had to make due with a Rabbi on a rotating basis. At that time, it was determined that having a permanent Rabbi, even part-time, was a necessary and important improvement.

Now, as this Jewish Community has steadily grown to over 100 members, there are more Rabbinical questions, more B'nai Mitzvah, more deaths, more births, more interfaith exchanges, simply more changes – so, it is naturally time to reexamine WHAT are the Rabbinical staffing needs and wants in this congregation. HOW MUCH would the desired staffing level cost and HOW might we achieve that level. These are legitimate questions that we should be asking of ourselves.

These are important questions that must be answered by this Community. It is our task to gather those answers. And we want to share with you our plan and approach. So, please listen carefully, but make note of any questions or comments you have on the information we present, because afterwards, you will have the opportunity to speak up and have them addressed.

4. Committee's Charter & Action Plan (refer to Charter document)

At the beginning of that document, we clearly state our Purpose and Objectives.

As you can read, the focus of this Committee is simply to determine what YOU the membership need and want in terms of Rabbinical support, and then figure what that means in terms of staffing levels, affiliation, costs, and funding. No more, no less.

Note that there is NO mention of who. So, whatever the desired Rabbinical staffing level desired by this congregation, based on our information gathering, that simply is what our report will reflect. The JCCO Board is still responsible for the personnel decisions. But, to their credit, they are interested in hearing from the membership through our Committee's work, to see what direction we want to go.

So, once you accept what are the Objectives of this Committee, then the key factor becomes how we intend to accomplish those goals.

The basis of our action plan is to engage the members in a variety of ways. Obviously, one way is what you see tonight – a Community Forum, where we can gather together to hear information and then discuss.

Another option we are offering is simply to talk to people directly. Since some people are not comfortable sharing their thoughts in a group setting, they can contact any of on the Committee to set up a separate discussion session. However, be aware that we have a specific agenda of information we are gathering, so we will be asking certain questions in this discussion.

*Strategic Committee on Rabbinical Staffing*

COMMUNITY FORUM

November 13, 2007

*MEETING NOTES*

Finally, the culmination of all this information sharing and discussion will be a Survey sent to each member, where they will be asked specific questions with specific choices to respond. Again, this Survey will be focused on rabbinical needs and desires, affiliation, costs, and funding.

So, along the way, the Committee plans to keep everyone informed of what we are doing and the information we are gathering. To that end, we have established a link on our JCCO website, where we have posted some of our documents already (ones that you have in your packet). If you miss a meeting, or just want to check on the information gathered, this is a place for anyone to find out the latest. I want to Thank our webmaster, Paul Spencer, for his excellent work in setting this up for us.

That is a general overview of our Action Plan, but I want to take a little more time to go over the time table. If you will look at the Committee Report given at the last Board meeting (on 11/6), you will see a timeline of our planned activities.

Of special interest is the next Community Forum, where will address that key issue of what are the Rabbinical needs and desires of the membership.

It will be at this Forum, where Rabbi Jay will share information on his typical Rabbinical duties. Then, we will ask for inputs from YOU, the membership, for any other needs or desires. We also plan to have an activity for indicating preferences of what services have more meaning or significance for you (personally) and the community. So, we certainly hope that we will have a strong turnout for that session.

5. Questions & Suggestions on our Approach

**Question:** What % of time does the Rabbi currently work – contractually & actual?

➤ **Response:** *Since this area is not the topic for this Community Forum, we will address this information in the next Forum on Rabbinical Needs.*

**Comment:** Members needs to know current staffing level as a benchmark to weigh future questions about Rabbinical staffing.

**Comment:** This committee has a two-fold task:

1. Rabbinical staffing level
2. Affiliation (but beware that Affiliation comes with strings attached – pros & cons)

**Question:** In contacting other congregations, how do you determine what are “appropriate” congregations to talk to? Especially since Bend seems unique and people embrace that distinction.

**Comment:** The timeline for this committee’s work seems too compressed. It would appear that you (and the Community) need more time to do a thorough job.

**Question:** How is committee going to reach people who won’t come to meetings?

➤ **Response:** *In the committee’s Action Plan we have other ways for communicating with people (such as personal contact); but ultimately, it is up to Members to make an effort to participate and know what is going on.*

*Strategic Committee on Rabbinical Staffing*

COMMUNITY FORUM

November 13, 2007

*MEETING NOTES*

**Question:** What is the definition of Rabbinical Needs? Doesn't it depend on who?

➤ **Response:** *There will be a separate Community Forum (the next one) to specifically deal with what Rabbinical Needs means to this congregation. Meanwhile, it is the committee's role to be objective in gathering, reviewing, sharing, and reporting the data back to the Community and the Board, with options.*

**Comment:** In the Survey questions, it might be helpful to ask about the community level of involvement of the respondent.

**Comment:** Don't confuse the issues of Rabbinical Staffing needs and Affiliation.

**Comment:** As the committee develops their recommendations, they should share them with Members before committing them to the Board.

**Comment:** Members will process the committee's information differently and at different paces. Committee timeframe is VERY tight; ask for more time if necessary.

**Comment:** Committee should look at demographics of our community and try to determine if there is a trend/correlation in the change in demographics and membership.

**Comment:** The Process is important, but so are emotions; there are relationships at stake.

**Comment:** Get the answers about Rabbinical needs by asking Rabbi Jay.

➤ **Response:** *The committee has met with Rabbi Jay, and does have information on Rabbinical duties from his perspective. But, members needs are equally important.*

**Comment:** Survey should clarify what "Rabbinical needs" mean.

**Comment:** The costs for Rabbinical staffing may be competing with costs for Building.

**Comment:** Our congregation is not likely to reach consensus on Affiliation.

**Comment:** Concerned that the timeframe is not realistic. Committee should step back and slow down; so as not to be criticized for being rushed.

**Question:** In the process, is the Committee recommending a "final" solution? If so, it should first be presented to the community for comments.

➤ **Response:** *The committee will be recommending options to the Board based on the results of the survey. But, the Board will make any "final" decision on staffing.*

**Comment:** Finding other "appropriate" congregations could be very difficult.

**Comment:** The Committee should remind the congregation to care about the whole community.

**Comment:** The Committee should make sure to capture what Rabbinical needs people are willing to pay for.

## 6. Wrap-up & Next Steps

If you think of a question or an idea, later, or just weren't comfortable sharing in this group forum, know that you can contact us directly.

We want to Thank all you who came out tonight to listen to our information and for sharing your ideas on how we can improve our process.

We look forward to our future Community Forums; especially the next one which will deal with the Rabbinical needs and wants of the congregation. Be on the lookout for further information on when this will be scheduled.