

**Kehillat Beth Israel
Board of Directors
January 27, 2022
Zoom Meeting
Minutes**

Present:

Norm Ferkin
Jeff Greenberg
Adina Libin
David Lyman

Jaimee Mitzmacher
Victor Rabinovitch
David Roytenberg
Jeremy Rudin

Donna Strauss
Olga Strelchenko
Judah Silverman
Harland Tanner
Madelaine Werier

Secretary:

Jodi Gitter

Clergy Present:

Rabbi Eytan Kenter
Rabbi Deborah Zuker

Staff Present:

Rena Garshowitz

Regrets:

None

1. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1.1 Call to Order

Victor Rabinovitch

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.

1.2 Call for Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Victor Rabinovitch

None of the members present declared a conflict of interest.

1.3 D'Var Torah

Rabbi Kenter

1.4 Moment of Silence to Commemorate Those Congregants Who Have Passed Away Since the Last Board Meeting **Victor Rabinovitch**

Glenda Lederman
Ethel Kerzner
Sheir Berman
Evelyn Hoffman

1.5 Approval of Board Minutes From the Meeting Held on December 16, 2021 **Victor Rabinovitch**

A motion was made by Jodi Gitter and seconded by Olga Strelchenko to approve the Board minutes from the meeting held on December 16, 2021.

All were in favour. The motion was carried.

1.6 Business Arising from Previous Minutes **Victor Rabinovitch**

None

2.0 REPORTING WITH DISCUSSION AND VOTE

2.1 OTT AIP (Ottawa Talmud Torah Agreement in Principle)
Jeremy Rudin

Jeremy began by stating that what he is proposing tonight is that the Board approve the AIP between KBI and OTT. This is an excellent opportunity to improve and enrich the services KBI provides to our members and to Jewish education and the community at large. The “joining of forces” between KBI and OTT will benefit both organizations. However, if this AIP is not approved, Jeremy cautioned that the discussions would be difficult to recommence at a later date.

The final approval will take place in April after financial and legal due diligence have taken place.

Rabbi Kenter spoke about how OTT’s values align with KBI’s and our visions are consistent with one another’s.

From KBI’s perspective, the main elements of the agreement are as follows:

- OTT would become part of KBI before the start of the next school year.
- KBI would commit to maintaining many current practices of OTT for the next five years:
 - using the name Ottawa Talmud Torah
 - remaining open to attendance by non-members
 - maintaining the existing discount for members of synagogues other than KBI
- The agreement would be subject to due diligence by both parties.

Jeremy explained that it is reassuring that OTT has usually operated with a modest surplus with in recent years, with an accumulated cushion roughly equal to one year of operating expenditures.

However, there are financial risks, which include the fact that OTT has relied heavily on revenue from charity bingos. These revenues have been disrupted by the pandemic and may not be reliable long-term. Additionally, subsidies from the Jewish Federation, which were a substantial source of income in the past, would be re-examined by Federation and these subsidies also depend on enrolment relative to other supplemental schools. Also, the grants received through the Ottawa Jewish Community Foundation (from past donations that specify the OTT) can vary in annual value from year to year. Finally, it is difficult to know how many teachers are needed from year to year, as this depends on varying enrolments.

KBI's Finance Committee has approved up to \$12,000.00 for legal advice, as our portion of legal costs that will be shared with OTT.

The floor was then opened to questions.

Norm asked whether or not OTT's teachers are unionized. Jeremy replied that they are.

Jaimee asked about shared resources (clergy, office staff...) and wondered, if KBI's resources are already stretched thin, how would staff be able to allocate time to OTT's endeavours? Jeremy replied that KBI and OTT would become one. As such, KBI's Senior Rabbi would become the supervisor of the head of OTT. One of OTT's administrative staff would continue doing some of this work, at least for the first year..

Madelaine asked about the structure and management of the school; specifically, what will be the structure pertaining to the chain of responsibility? She also inquired about its Universal Design for Learning – its inclusion model. Jeremy replied that if the merger were to go ahead, the KBI Board would set policies for the school just as it sets policies for other synagogue activities. A new 'school committee' would likely be set up by the Board, including OTT parents as

members. Operating Policy #7 clearly outlines KBI's responsibility and accountability framework for all activities. Rabbi Kenter added that if the Board agrees to the AIP, we would adhere to our values (such as inclusion) in a meaningful way.

Donna asked if OTT's teachings would reflect Conservative values. Rabbi Kenter reiterated that our approach will align with KBI's Conservative Judaism values.

Jaimee said that the benefits of joining together far outweigh any challenges. KBI may gain in membership. She was aware that, like other synagogue schools, tuition fees are not expected to fully cover the costs of running the school. Bingo, Federation grants and membership contributions will all help to defray financial costs – just like the other schools in Ottawa.

Judah thanked Jeremy and his Committee for bringing the joining of OTT and KBI closer to fruition. He reminded the Board that communication will be key as we move forward with the plans.

A motion was made by Jeremy Rudin and seconded by Jeff Greenberg for the Board to endorse the Agreement in Principle with Ottawa Talmud Torah.

All were in favour. The motion was carried.

2.2 Any Business raised By a Director

Victor announced that Jay Amdur has agreed to Chair the Building and Lands Committee.

A motion was made by Norm Ferkin and seconded by David Roytenberg to install Jay Amdur as Chair of the Building and Lands Committee.

All were in favour. The motion was carried.

3.0 FINANCIAL MATTERS

3.1 Executive Director's Written Statement Respecting the Status of Staff Salaries and Remittances to Government Rena Garshowitz

Rena presented the statement for employee wages to the Board.

3.2 Q2 Review

Adina Libin

Adina presented the 2nd Quarter Financial Report. Dues are being reported monthly as they are received. Our financial position is solidly on budget.

Some highlights include:

- CBSO Legacy Fund approved our request to cover KBI's remaining costs for tent rentals for the High Holidays.
- KBI had not budgeted for kiddushes due to the pandemic; however, some revenues for kiddushes were received.
- Salaries are where we budgeted them and are as expected.
- Spending on Building and Occupancy is a bit below what was budgeted.
- Programming costs are as expected.

Discussion ensued about Membership dues, and where we are at versus where we want to be.

4.0 REPORTING WITH DISCUSSION BUT WITHOUT VOTE

4.1 Presentation on Membership and Revenue Trends Rena Garshowitz

Rena presented a slide deck about KBI's membership make-up and its revenue trends from the past four years (2018-Present).

Some of the presentation's highlights include:

- There was a high total of 25 new households in the 2019/20 year when financial incentives to join were offered through the Federation's Jumpstart program.
- Membership renewal has been affected by the pandemic and specifically families with young children have not consistently renewed. These families have not joined elsewhere; perhaps they will re-join when the in-person gatherings reopen.
- KBI's membership distribution shows that a near majority (just under 50%) is over 65 years old.
- KBI has not sold High Holiday reserved seating during the pandemic, with a resulting loss of revenue.
- Donations and fundraising have decreased as well during the pandemic.
- Pertaining to revenues, KBI no longer has revenue from some supplementary schools who used to rent space in our building. There is also a decline in revenues from parking. Modest revenues from OTT and Campbell Ford parking are still being collected.

Rena explained that the High Holidays in-person attendance is a strong motivator for many members to renew. The pandemic has affected this, with two years of uncertainties about in-person synagogue services.

Rabbi Kenter mentioned that he will be focusing on the 18-23 year old demographic. He is hopeful about developing ways in which to meet their needs.

Norm mentioned that a more active approach toward the 65+ demographic would be appreciated because it is such a large percentage of KBI's membership.

Victor thanked Rena for her coherent presentation about KBI's trends in Membership and Revenues. This is essential for future planning. Our next staff presentation will be on trends in our programs and participation.

**1. February Board Meeting Date
Rabinovitch**

Victor

Rena will circulate a poll to the Board to determine which date is preferred – the 17th or the 24th.

4.3 Other Business raised By a Director

Donna asked about KBI's Purim plans and about volunteering opportunities.

Rena highlighted two important upcoming dates:

- February 7th: Ophira Calof will speak in honour of Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month
- February 8th: KBI will launch its mishloach manot fundraising campaign

5. REPORTING WITHOUT DISCUSSION OR VOTE

**5.1.Security Update
Garshowitz**

Rena

Currently, there is no elevated threat in Ottawa. There is a need, though, for door-greeters, which is best practice for security. Having weekly Shabbat door-greeters is a friendly way to keep safe while being welcoming. Rena will create a sign-up sheet for Board members, with instructions on how to carry out these duties.

5.2 Committee Reports As Circulated

Victor mentioned that the committee reports were informative and fulsome. He stressed the importance of reading the reports and asking questions at Board meetings.

1. Other Business Raised By Any Director

Norm asked the Board to think about candidates who might be interested in making a Life and Legacy commitment.

Jaimee said that the Membership Committee is looking for someone in the 20-30 year old demographic who might be interested in being part of that committee.

6.0 IN CAMERA

7.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 PM.

The next Board Meeting - TBD