

## MINUTES OF THE CBI COMMUNITY MEETING

OCTOBER 23, 2011

Linda Minoff served as moderator.

CBI Board members present: Lou Davis, Ellen Kaufman, Gillian Kendall, Lauren Weinsier, Henry Simkin, Lois Dubin, Simona Ponzetta, David Cohen, Ester Bean, Neil Kudler, Peggy Besch

Also present: Rabbi Justin David, Executive Director Ben Cuperman

Ellen Kaufman, President of the Board of Directors, addressed the meeting and requested that all remarks be directed to Linda Minoff, that there be no cross-talk and that all comments and questions be respectful.

*When the minutes use the word "Comment" to begin a sentence, what follows is a member of the meeting making a point or raising a question or addressing an issue.*

The meeting had as its agenda four topics. The first three were related to the newly completed CBI survey.

Topic #1: The demographics of the congregation as indicated by the survey.

Topic #2: Issues of governance as raised by the results in the survey.

Topic #3: What brings us to CBI?

Topic #4: Issues surrounding the building that houses CBI.

Lou Davis led us through the survey results covering the topics: Governance and Demographics.

Ellen Kaufman (President) responded to some of the criticism regarding governance with five resolutions agreed upon by the Survey Review Group.

All congregants are welcome to attend Board meetings.

The minutes of the Board meetings should/will be made public in a more timely fashion and posted on the web site.

Congregants are encouraged to support the work of committees or to join them; and committees should increase communications with the congregation.

Personnel: Performance reviews are conducted at least yearly by the Personnel Committee consisting of both a conversation with the employee and a written evaluation. To avoid misunderstandings which can happen from our very human desire to soften any critical message, a numerical rating on a scale of 1-5 will be assigned to categories of performance in addition to a descriptive assessment. (During the meeting there were several objections raised to this policy, and the Personnel Committee will be asked to revisit it—EK)

A congregational survey should probably be done every two years.

*Most of the following responses are noted by content not by the name of the congregant speaking.*

- It was noted that in the past months there had been thirteen resignations, and that the community at large had never received feedback about them.

Leadership response: most of these ‘resignations’ represented retirements of members who had neither paid dues for over a year nor responded to phone and written invitations to discuss abatements. The Membership Committee conducts exit interviews with members who actually resign, and that feedback is shared with the Board. When appropriate, that information is included in Board Minutes published in Kehila.

- The issue of personnel decisions was raised: it was stated that we have had personnel changes without community input, although it was also noted that we have a Personnel Committee to whom the congregation has delegated the task of personnel review.

- A concern was expressed about the long delay between Board meetings and the minutes being published in Kehila. The reason is that there is a month delay until the following Board meeting at which time minutes are amended and approved. Furthermore because of the Kehila publication deadline, another month passes before the minutes are published. The suggestion was then made that, in order to increase efficiency, the Board minutes be vetted by a committee of three and then made public (in order to save time). There were positive murmurings at this latter suggestion.

Leadership response: We will attempt to set up a system for vetting the minutes and publishing them in a more timely fashion.

- A great deal of concern was expressed regarding the new increase in the minimum size of donations to various funds. The amount has been raised from no minimum to ten dollars. An opinion was expressed that the Board should have put the idea of the raise out to the community before making it. The speaker further opined that the Board should let the community know when this and other issues of interest to the congregations at large, are being considered. Another congregant expressed his opinion that countless decisions are being made weekly regarding running the synagogue, that we have hired an executive director to oversee the functions of the synagogue, and that this matter properly fell within his purview.

It was stated that the synagogue is a complex community run by volunteers, and that anyone concerned can join the Board. A comment was made in response that one shouldn't have to be on the Board to know about such issues.

It was asked whether or not the rise in the minimum donation would cause an increase in the various funds or whether, in fact, the donations served community, rather than

fundraising, purposes. The donations let the community know about births, deaths and other milestones. It was asked: what do we value more – the community or the dollar?

In another comment, a congregant stated that the synagogue cannot be governed by the whole, and that the Board is delegated. It was suggested that guidelines be established as to what kind of issues should be brought before the congregation (and that as many congregants as possible should come to community meetings and voice opinions).

Leadership response:

Our Executive Director determined that the administrative cost of publishing an acknowledgement in Kehila and mailing a note to the honoree is about \$7.00. He recommended an increase in the minimum donation to \$10 to reflect our overhead and to ensure that the presumed intention of the donor to benefit the synagogue was carried out. The President agreed and announced it to the Board in August. It is the opinion of the leadership that this type of judgment falls properly within the purview of the Executive Director. Additionally, Congregants and non-congregants alike are always welcome to donate amounts of any size to the congregation and send a note letting their honoree know. Members who have ideas about how to publicly acknowledge smaller contributions without printing names in Kehila or mailing notices to the honoree are invited to submit suggestions to [CBIBoard@verizon.net](mailto:CBIBoard@verizon.net).

- It was suggested that the Board agenda be put online.

Leadership response: The Board agenda is determined 3-7 days prior to the Board meeting. We will attempt to post it onto the web site or perhaps onto Facebook.

- Comment: A congregant expressed the opinion that the community should know when an employee is due for a performance evaluation and broad community input should be invited.

Leadership response: The community may give feedback about CBI's employees at any time. This feedback should be addressed to the Personnel Committee via the Chair, Larry Hott at [hott@florentinefilms.org](mailto:hott@florentinefilms.org). Notices will be put into Kehila to remind congregants of this opportunity to give their feedback.

Comment: We should honor those who are here on a Sunday night and clearly committed to issues surrounding the synagogue, but people not present are worried about details, and there should be a way of reaching them with information.

Comment (Board member): Things happen on the Board that we on the Board don't realize are important to the community. If something catches your eye, or you hear about something via the Kehila or another source, something that raises your concern, contact the Board. We can't always anticipate what will be important (as in the rise of a minimum donation to various funds).

One congregant stated that she loves the way the synagogue is run, but she wonders if personnel under review receive letters about their performance? Response: Yes

A Board member expressed the need of the Board to exercise discretion regarding some issues, particularly those regarding personnel.

- It was suggested, to the approval of many, that an email address, for questions or comments about issues, about personnel, about anything, be established. It will be done.

Leadership Response: We have established an email address: CBIBoard@verizon.net, for congregational input regarding Board activities. The Vice President of the Board, Lauren Weinsier, has agreed to review these comments and bring them to the leadership.

Comment: a key dynamic in group processes is knowing that no single individual is going to get what he or she wants.

A question: Is our relationship with Beit Ahavah still on the table?

It was reported that the synagogues of the upper Valley (CBI, BA, JCA, Temple Sinai, and Sons of Zion) are involved in a Federation-sponsored Upper Valley Synagogue Collaboration, and that we're planning events together. The respective presidents of the two congregations have been discussing ongoing collaboration through these meetings.

There was concern expressed as to whether or not we had behaved in a welcoming manner to Beit Ahavah. Those who had attended a meeting with Beit Ahavah said CBI had been welcoming.

Comment: It would be useful to clarify the kosher kitchen policies. There are issues concerning usage and expense.

Ben Cuperman (Executive Director): See me.

There was some discussion about what function a synagogue serves in a Jew's life in the 21st Century. It was noted that this would be a good topic for another community meeting. It was also noted that there was a quandary regarding the role of the synagogue: those whose opinions about its role might prove very interesting indeed are not the people attending these meetings.

The issue of what the synagogue has to offer in the way of programming was discussed. 50% of the membership no longer has children at home, and yet much of the programming is, it was stated, for children. Programming A.K. (after kids) was not as interesting.

A comment was made about the availability of adult education, and the fact that Rabbi David has put together the visit of a speaker practically every month.

- It was suggested that adult education be free.

Leadership Response: This is now the case for most of our adult education programming--thank you to the Adult Education Committee!

It was noted on behalf of the Committee on Jewish Connections that the Committee would like to create events and occasions for people to meet and enjoy. Contact Simona Pozzetto, chair of the Committee, for what you would like to see.

It was remarked that the community still has to wrestle with what conversions are accepted by the synagogue.

Comment: The survey data tells us nothing about who's around us (and outside of the synagogue). It's important for us to know who else is there.

Ellen Kaufman thanked all those who attended the meeting. The next meetings are on Sunday January 22 9:30-11:30am (topics: Ritual, Religious School, and two topics from congregant requests that should be submitted to [CBIBoard@verizon.net](mailto:CBIBoard@verizon.net)), Sunday April 22 (time to be announced) , and the Annual Meeting on Thursday June 28.

Minutes of this meeting will be made public as soon as possible.

Ellen Kaufman thanked Linda Minoff and all who attended. She noted that each one of us can be friendly to others at services and take care to welcome the newcomer. By being open and gracious we can create the kind of community we want to be a part of.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Gillian Kendall