

Minutes
Temple Sinai
Strategic Planning Council (SPC)
Informational Meeting
April 16, 2007

Meeting opened at 7:05 p.m.

PRESENT: (Based on Sign-In List) Jerry Silverman, Bailey Bloom, Bert Bloom, Julie Marks, Steve Marks, Barbara Haynes, Amy Rosoff, Trudi Renwick, Rhoda Pickus, Charlie Newman, Karyl Maenza, Ron Maenza, Margo Olson, Jeff Olson, Phil Bernnard, Stephen Selig, Melissa Woods, Jeff Paul, Martha Dexter, Selma Harwood, Gil Harwood, Bernie Forman, Melissa Strauss, Cheryl Hoffman, Aldo Vacs, Matt Cort, Arthur Lowenthal, Maxine Lautenberg, Ronnie Silver, Peter Seidman, Ellie deVries, Larry Fein, Camm Epstein, Naomi Tannen, Michael Marx, Linda Glansberg, Barbara Levine.

1. The congregation observed a moment of silence in honor of the tragedy at Virginia Tech University.
2. Naomi Tannen encouraged members of the congregation to attend a program May 6 by Rabbi Richard Address on building a caring community.
3. Charles Newman gave a Power Point presentation summarizing recent activities of the Strategic Planning Council (SPC), including:
 - February 7, 2006 congregational meeting in which the board was authorized to spend seed money on demographic, financial feasibility, and architectural studies.
 - Summary of demographic study.
 - Development of a communications plan.
 - Creation of an architect subcommittee, which evaluated six architectural firms and recommended Levin/Brown for approval by the Board.
 - Architect “deliverables,” including design plans for staying at 509 Broadway and an alternative site.
 - Next steps, including meetings on Sept. 10 and Nov. 5.

Following is a summary of some of the questions and comments offered at the meeting:

Margo Olson: The larger SPC itself is no longer a functioning committee. I no longer receive e-mails on SPC meetings and activities.

Newman: There is a list at the back of the room for members to sign up to get involved in the SPC and to get on the SPC e-mail list.

Member of the congregation: Communication with the SPC members has been bad.

Larry Fein: Give credit to Newman for perseverance in his work on the SPC over the years.

Naomi Tannen: What is the timeframe?

Stephen Selig: Two years to make a decision on the building and get it done.

Melissa Strauss: The temple should first set a budget for what it can afford before going to an architect to draw up plans. It's backwards to go to an architect first.

Newman: The process that will be followed is: 1) undertake a needs assessment; 2) architectural drawings; 3) estimate cost for project; and 4) a vote by the membership.

Trudi Renwick: The temple consulted a fundraising consultant who said we have to have plans first because we can't ask people how much they would theoretically give. The fundraiser said we can't go out and raise money without plans.

Matt Cort: The SPC subcommittee communicated the temple's financial needs in broad terms to the architect so the plans won't be out of line with our needs.

Camm Epstein: We already know what our needs are through previous needs assessments and surveys, so spending money on that is wasteful. We already have architectural drawings from Jeff Olson, so spending money on that is wasteful. It is foolish to have an architect draw up plans for an alternative site without having a specific property in mind. The temple should ask builders for estimates to construct Jeff Olson's plan, bring the results back to the community, and use the \$27,500 for renovations.

Selig: We've taken all of our information to professionals and they all said it isn't enough. They said we don't have enough information. The fundraising consultant said we do not have enough information to determine how much money we could raise.

Newman: 9 people on the SPC subcommittee discussed these issues for a year. It is important to have two options -- one to stay on Broadway and one to leave.

Bailey Bloom: There is an ethical issue with the URJ sending an architect for free and then him turning around and bidding on the project. What is the SPC doing to unite the congregational split between those who want to stay and those who want to go?

Maxine Lautenberg: I am concerned about the divisive language used at the meeting.

Michael Marx: What size do we want our community to be? Should we limit growth? What do we lose in terms of the sense of community when we grow larger?

Newman: Right now, we are open to all.

Linda Glansberg: We've already done a needs assessment. We're all frustrated with the process. Better communication is needed.

Member of the congregation: Minutes of the board should be online and other information should be sent regularly through e-mail updates.

Selma Harwood: Why hasn't the congregation seen Jeff Olson's plans?

Jeff Olson: There are two sets of plan -- one done three years ago by an architect and one by me. My plan is based on the needs assessment and other information gathered by the SPC. My plans were a gift to the congregation. The fact that they have not been seen by the congregation is a problem.

Lautenberg: Were they not released because of a secret agenda to stay on Broadway?

Selig: Nobody who had the plans thought there was any utility in showing them to the congregation.

Margo Olson: There is a crumbling at the seams of the congregation right now due to the lack of transparency and lack of sharing of information.

Barbara Haynes: The architectural plans and other information should be put on the website.

Cort: There is no secret agenda or conspiracy. The subcommittee represents a diversity of opinions. The congregation has already authorized the spending of \$25,000.

Jeff Olson: The \$25,000 was authorized for a financial feasibility study, a demographic study, and an architectural study. Spending \$27,500 just for an architectural study is not the best way to spend the money. I am thinking about leaving the congregation after many years as a member.

Member of the congregation: Does Board feel it has authority to spend \$25,000?

Newman: Yes, we have authority to spend \$25,000. If congregation second guesses every decision, we will not move forward.

Margo Olson: The congregation trusted that the Board would follow through with its promises to report back etc. when it authorized the \$25,000 expenditure. Now, we don't trust you anymore.

Newman: The minutes of previous SPC meetings will be sent out and there will be better communications.

Barbara Levine: Not everyone agrees with critics of the SPC. I trust the board and SPC.

Melissa Woods: Apologizes to Olson. We are stuck now.

Rhoda Pickus: Architect's drawings, minutes of meetings, and a summary of status of SPC activities should be circulated.

Newman: I will post minutes on website.

Selig: Apologizes. All board members are volunteers, do the best they can, and give a great deal of time to the temple.

Rabbi Jonathan: Temple does many things well and some not so well, like communications and recognizing volunteers. Board should address the issues of Jeff Olson's plans; consult minutes about authorization for spending \$25,000; and consider creating a listserv. Trust goes two ways. No one was excluded purposefully.

Rabbi Linda: Everyone in the room has a love and commitment to Temple Sinai and we should all keep that in mind. She called for a moment of silence, followed by the singing of "Oseh Shalom."

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jerry Silverman, recording secretary