

Project Beit Tefilah Update – December 29, 2011

Project *Beit Tefilah* (House of Prayer) is the name we have given to the project relating to the opportunity presented to us by the offer to purchase our building and land. We plan to have monthly updates here in the *Shofar*. You can also look for information online at our website, www.btzbuffalo.org. Jonathan Epstein will be chairing a communications team to provide relevant information to our congregational family concerning this project on a timely basis.

Informational forums were held Dec. 6 in the evening and on Dec. 7 in the morning. We expect to have further forums in the future. The congregation will have plenty of opportunities to provide input to the process through focus groups and/or directly to the lay leadership.

At this point, **no decision has been made to sell our property**. Similarly, **no decision has been made as to any potential location** to move to, if we do sell. Anyone who has told you to the contrary is simply wrong. What we do know is that if we do sell, the offer is sufficiently large that **we do not anticipate the need for any mandatory capital fund contributions** or dues increases to pay for the new building. We also know that if we do sell, that **we will be able to stay in our current building until a new home is ready** for us – there should not be any need for a temporary home.

So far, the Board of Trustees has authorized Janet Gunner, as President, to sign a **non-binding** letter of intent. Our attorney is actively engaged with the potential buyers' attorney in the preparation of a contract of sale. Any contract of sale cannot be finalized unless it is first approved by the Congregation and the Court. We are actively engaged in a “due diligence” process, in which we are collecting information to allow the Board and the congregation to make an informed decision – when the time comes to make such a decision. We hope that this due diligence phase will be completed in the Spring of 2012.

Several teams have been appointed, including the overall Beit Tefilah Committee, chaired by Harvey Sanders and including Alan Goldstein, Janet Gunner, Harold Halpern, Larry Levin and Rabbi Netter.

First, to ensure that we fully evaluate the option of staying on Getzville Road and not accepting the purchase offer, there is a Current Building Maintenance, Repair and Renovation Team, chaired by Marshall Lipman. That team has begun the preliminary work of determining the cost to remain in our existing building and to repair and renovate it to make it accessible to our members.

Janet Presser and Irv Sellers have agreed to co-chair a Keshet Inclusion Team, to ensure that whether we stay in our current building or move to a new building, that we consider the special needs of persons with disabilities, illnesses and/or frailty.

There is a New Building Community Partners Team, chaired by Janet Gunner. That team is already reaching out to potential community partners, including other synagogues and educational and other organizations within the Jewish community with whom it may be possible to collaborate on a new home, whether in terms of a joint campus or shared buildings.

The New Building Site Selection Team and the New Building Design Team, both chaired by Harvey Sanders, will consider potential locations for a new home (which may depend, of course, on the work of the Community Partners Team) and what that home might look like. In response to repeated questions from members at the two informational forums, the Board allocated some money to pay for some limited professional consultations (e.g. engineers, architects) that are necessary to help with evaluating potential sites, so we can provide members with more specific information. Those teams are in the earliest stages of their work.

If, **and only if**, the congregation decides to sell the property and move, there will be other teams needed. A Preservation Team would look at how to preserve our history, memorials, honors, art and artifacts. A New Building Dedication Policy Team (to be chaired by Harold Gelfand) would recommend policy concerning the named dedication of various components of a new home. A Grant Procurement Team would look at whether grants would be available in connection with this potential project. A Capital Fund Campaign Team, to be co-chaired by Harold Halpern and Larry Levin, will organize and conduct **voluntary** fundraising to ensure the

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Building Fund has the strongest possible base to maintain a new building for many years to come. A Building Construction and Site Development Management Team would oversee any actual construction, a Moving Team would coordinate a move and a Celebratory Team would plan a celebration. Although it is premature for those groups to get too active at the present, there will be some preliminary work so that we will be prepared to move forward efficiently should the congregation decide to do so.

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, please feel free to reach out to Janet Gunner or Harvey Sanders.