

Sept. 8 special board meeting – minutes

Board members present:

Josh Engman, Marty Rosenfeld, Jody Jacklin, Brad Long, Alice Freidgood, Frank Marcovis, Mary Reavley, Mike Kuperman, Jill Marks, Sheldon Ohringer, Steve Weiss, Kim Waltman, Maddie Schoen, Mike Stein, Josh Kimmelman, Peggy Altman, Ken Waltman, Cantor Bletstein, Rabbi Edelman-Blank

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Bimah and security sign-up lists for the High Holidays were passed around.

Divar Torah focused on God's sanctuary

Ken Waltman and Jody Jacklin presented findings of the building & grounds committee's research of the new synagogue in Omaha. They shared the square footage of the current building and distributed multiple hand-outs; reviewed the plan of the structure in Omaha and had visuals that showed the space. There were a variety of questions from board members.

Some key points made during the board member discussion about the Omaha synagogue include:

- Openness, wood, arc – feels warm
- Doesn't feel cavernous
- Their chapel is a square room and everything is on wheels so it can be flexible
- Utilitarian approach – allows for change up of aesthetics for youth events, etc.
- People today aren't building worship areas like they used to – more church like in the past, not what they're doing as much now.
- Flexibility of space is key.
- Chairs have space for books beneath them.
- Arc can be moved within the chapel.
- A lot of overhead lighting lends a nice flair.
- The Omaha congregation doesn't miss library at all but wishes they had more cabinet space for books and tallit.
- Rather than having tallit hanging in the open, hoping to build additional enclosures.
- Their committee (in Omaha) visited 5 synagogues in Chicago – one aspect they incorporated is a washing station.
- They brought furniture with them from former building.
- Mikvah in Omaha located at senior life center and was renovated 8 years ago.
- Kitchen was similar to ours.
- There was a laundry room – room so linens can be done in house.
- They have a very substantial endowment that pays for executive director's salary and house keeper salary.
- The endowment also covers rabbi and assistant rabbi
- The endowment can't be used for bricks and mortar
- The caretaker lives in the basement but the housekeeper does not
- They use a service for outdoor grounds care

- The cost in today's dollars (round numbers) is \$4.4 million which includes an unfinished basement, no school wing (because of the local Jewish Day School) and does not include the cost of the land the structure is built on. That cost also doesn't reflect changing/altering the Omaha plans to better meet our needs. That would add some cost.
- The current plan does not include a Cantor's office
- The space was designed by a Jewish architect from RDG
- There is a room for Women's League activities and that space serves as a work space for other groups.
- The Omaha congregation regrets not including gift shop
- The youth hang out in multi-purpose room

Two options were presented if the decision is made not to proceed with building new space:

- A complete remodel of central part of the facility making a flex facility
- Redoing central part of the facility and bringing the sanctuary and chapel "up to snuff"

Additional key points made during the discussion about what to consider if this space is remodeled:

- Both options entail completely renovating central space we're in. Demo the school and sanctuary and turn this 19,500 sq ft building into a flex facility. Entails main social hall area serves as both sanctuary and social hall. Requires large moving contingent for bar/bat mitzvah and break-the-fast type of events. The arc would be built facing the correct direction and the gift shop would shift to around the corner. The cantor's office would be near the admin offices as well. The lounge and library would be redone into a cyber cafe, etc.
- The chapel would be torn down with the sanctuary and rebuilt chapel in the space.
- The sukah would remain in the current space.
- The frequency of stage use in our current facility was discussed. The Omaha congregation brings in a portable stage when needed.
- The cost of renovating existing space is roughly \$2 million plus an additional \$300,000 for a sprinkler system and \$150,000 for an elevator. The \$2 million does include demolition of some space and additional parking.
- Things TI treasures could be incorporated into new or renovated space
- The \$4.4 million price tag does not include
- Other option is leaving the stage, keeping the sanctuary and assigning a budget to have it go 5-10 more years.
- A congregant discussed helping with the costs (up to \$10,000) of hiring an architect to perform an assessment of the existing space to determine how it could be renovated while also expanding outdoor space for worship.
- If the social hall is redone, the seating would be similar to the current sanctuary.
- We have to make a new facility as inviting and welcoming as we all remember this facility as being years ago.

Sheldon Ohringer moved to give the congregation insight about the options that the board is discussing. The motion was seconded by Mike Kuperman.

Contributions are needed for the High Holiday flower fund.

The board meeting concluded at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Peggy Altman & Kim Waltman