

Chevre--

At the annual meeting I gave a verbal update on our strategic planning process and forecast that the Beth El Board would be taking the information generated by the task forces and merging it with the information gained from the congregational survey to create a unified strategic plan. I last wrote to the congregation in July, letting you know of the work done in our board retreat. You can see that letter and other materials at www.betheldurham.org/synagogue/strategic_plan.html. Today I am sharing a little of the progress we've made and inviting you to participate in the next step in our strategic planning process.

The Finance Committee generated a 5-year strategic budget, that accounts for all proposed additional expenses that are emerging from the Strategic Planning process, flags ideas for cost-cutting, and identifies different income scenarios based on membership growth projections and additional income projections. We feel confident that all operating costs over the next five years can be met and are committed to conducting a feasibility study before any campaign to insure it will be compatible with fundraising that supports ongoing costs.

The Executive Director (ED) Casey Baker has been implementing the Fostering Community Task Force's recommendations, including creating a congregational handbook, improving accessibility, renewing and reinvigorating the chavurah program, and improving our database to facilitate further community connections. Although this work is still in progress, the improved database and the updated (soon to be released) website are important steps toward making it easier to find information.

The Va'ad and the Education and Youth Director have revised the curriculum to make it easier for teachers to implement, increased communication and clarity in the b'nei mitzvah process, and maintained the new level of parental communication that occurred over the past year. The Board felt these changes support the fundamental goal of Beth El's preK-7 educational programming, which is to ensure our students have a love of Judaism and can enter any similar synagogue and participate as a result of the education we provide. Post B'nei Mitzvah, the Board has concluded that adding a Teen Engagement Coordinator position for 2015-2016 is the next step in strengthening Beth El's youth program, especially in light of Rachel Margolis leaving the Midrasha.

The Buildings and Grounds Task Force has selected an architect, Weinstein-Friedlein, to develop renderings and cost estimates for three different scenarios (ranging in scope) for changing Beth El's physical footprint and infrastructure. These renderings will be based on the input gathered by the B&G committee, the results of the congregation-wide survey, observations of the building when in use, and conversations with interest groups. The renderings will offer visual examples to generate further congregational feedback and allow further consideration of fiscal and other opportunities and constraints.

I am extremely appreciative of all the hard work the task forces, board, and community have done to bring us to this point. I hope that as this process moves forward, our congregation will continue to be just as actively involved in exploring possibilities for the next phase of Beth El's development. At this time, we will be convening small groups to share updates in person and share with the architects ideas for how our space could better serve the congregation's needs. I hope you will find time to come and hear more about the progress we've made and give input into creating a vision of what ways our facilities could better serve our purposes.

Below is a schedule of opportunities to come and talk. Although we are inviting people based on specific affiliations/topics, anyone is welcome at any conversation. A board member and the architects will be at all the meetings and want to hear your thoughts about what barriers exist to Beth El best meeting your needs and the needs of the congregation.

To sign up for a meeting, please click on this link to RSVP: <http://goo.gl/i4bM7m>.

All meetings will take place at Beth El unless otherwise noted.

Meeting Schedule

Sunday March 8th:

10:00am: Orthodox Kehillah

11:00am: House and Art Committees

Tuesday, March 17th:

7:00pm: Past Presidents

8:00pm: Ritual Committee, Shlichei Tzibbur and Gabbaim

Wednesday, March 18th (Home of Michael and Jacki Resnick in Chapel Hill)
6:30pm: Open Meeting with Focus on Inclusion
7:30pm: Membership, Synagogue Life, Community of Caring and Kol Kolotenu
8:30pm: MoB, Social Action and Sisterhood

Tuesday, March 24th:
7:00pm: Finance Committee
8:00pm: Va'ad HaChinuch

Sunday, March 29th:
9:30am: Families with young children (babysitting will be provided)
10:30am: Weekly Minyan attendees
11:30am: Lifelong Learning Committee

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Galanter", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Rachel Galanter
President, Beth El Synagogue