

**YOUNGSTOWN CONGREGATIONAL COLLABORATION IMPLEMENTATION
COMMITTEE (YCCIC)**

Meeting Minutes June 23, 30 and July 8, 2021

Present Were:

Mark Huberman
Elliot Legow
Lee Burdman
Jack Kessler
Sam D. Roth
Harriet Schor
Brigitt Berk
Aaron Hively
Beverly Nathan
Richard Shapiro
Samie Winick
Mark Zeidenstein
Andy Lipkin, Ex Officio
Susan Schwebel Epstein, Ex Officio

Temple Presidents: Nancy Burnett. (Jeff Solomon was absent from the meeting 7/8/21)
Temple Treasurers: Alan Mirkin and Linda Davis. Bob Rawl was absent from the meetings on 6/30/21 and 7/8/21)

Absent:

Alvin Weisberg, Ex Officio

The meetings were called to order at 7:00 p.m. except for the meeting on June 30th which began at 7:30 p.m.

At the meeting held June 23, 2021, the Committee was unable to reach a consensus on which building should house the new Congregation, with a tie vote of six votes for the six Rodef Sholom and six votes for El Emeth. An agreement was reached to set a further meeting for June 30, 2021, to see whether sufficient sentiment existed to pursue a “Two Temple Solution” involving both Rodef Sholom and El Emeth as initially proposed by Sam D. Roth and as further developed by Booker Kessler and Samie Winick. The Committee further agreed to continue to invite the respective Temple Presidents and Treasurers to gain the benefit of their perspective on this pivotal decision.

At the meeting held June 30, 2021, all members present once again voiced the opinion that although the selection of one building to house the new congregation was the ideal choice, there remained insufficient support for an agreement on either building within the Committee and, therefore, likely within the respective Temple Boards and Memberships. The Committee further agreed that a “Two-Building Solution” was the only practical option. However, since more time would be required to develop this option in a more detailed way, it was agreed that the Town Hall scheduled for July 8, 2021, was premature and should be rescheduled to a later date. The

Committee further agreed to use that July 8th date to hold a further meeting of this Committee in the hope of reaching a consensus on the use of the two buildings. The Committee further agreed to establish a special Subcommittee to develop the “Two Building Solution” more fully. Subsequent to the meeting, the following members agreed to serve on that Committee: Sam D. Roth, Alan Mirkin, Booker Kessler, Sami Winick, Dick Shapiro, Nancy Burnett, and Mark Huberman.

On July 7, 2021, the Special Subcommittee met and unanimously reached the following recommendations for a “Two Temple Solution” and rough Budgetary Framework drafted by Alan Mirkin, both of which were shared with the full Committee prior to the meeting:

Houses of Worship: *El Emeth and Rodef Sholom shall be preserved as active Houses of Worship for at least three years with the newly named “Congregation Ohev El Sholom” having two locations—one at the Rodef Sholom location on Elm Street and the other at the El Emeth location on Logan. After three years, it will take a 2/3 vote of all elected members of the new Board to sell, lease or otherwise dispose of either building.*

Shabbat and High Holiday Services: *Shabbat services will alternate between the buildings on a monthly basis with a Friday Reform service and a Saturday Conservative service at the same building except for during the High Holidays where services will take place at each location. The new Clergy will lead both the Friday night and Saturday Shabbat services. During the High Holidays, the new Clergy will split time between the two locations and additional lay or guest professional clergy will be engaged as needed.*

Events and Meetings: *Non-Holiday events and meetings will also alternate between the buildings on a monthly basis to coincide with usage during Shabbat weekends.*

Kashrut: *During the months in which weekend services take place at Elm Street, the kiddushes shall be dairy only. If larger events are requested at Elm Street, steps shall be taken to Kosher one of the kitchens if necessary.*

Education: *Since the location for the education of children for the coming school year will be at the Elm St where renovations and improvements are currently being made to accommodate the same, the location of the school for at least the first two years will be housed at the Elm Street location.*

Temple Mailing Address: *For at least two years, the new Congregation will have two mailing addresses: Ohev El Sholom on Elm St. and Ohev El Sholom on Logan.*

Temple Offices: *For at least two years, the new Congregation will have offices staffed at some level at both buildings. The new Clergy will be afforded offices at both buildings.*

Temple Staffing: *For at least two years, the new Congregation will be headed by the community’s only existing Executive Director, Sarah Wilschek. To preserve institutional memory and to facilitate a smooth consolidation, it is anticipated that during the same two year period, the new Congregation will seek to absorb and retain the principle existing staff of El Emeth and Rodef Sholom, and at least one staff member from Ohev Tzedek.*

New Board Discretion: *At the end of two years, the Board of the new Congregation shall have the right to modify the above recommendations regarding education, mailing address, office location(s) and staffing.*

Budget: *The Sub-Committee recommends the Budget framework for the new Congregation attached to these minutes as drafted by Alan Mirkin. The Budget anticipates annual savings of at least \$200,000.00.*

Effective Date: *It is anticipated, the Board of the new Congregation will continue to come into being on or about November 1, 2021, but that the status quo of operations at all three Congregations will be maintained until July 1, 2022, when it is anticipated the new Clergy will assume responsibilities.*

At the outset of the July 8th meeting, Alan Mirkin explained the assumptions underlying his budgetary framework and answered questions concerning the same. He acknowledged the difficulty in analyzing financial data from the three Congregations since they operate on different fiscal years, employ some different accounting methods, and sometimes include grant income and expenditures as regular income and expenses. He noted that the anticipated yearly savings to the community by utilizing two buildings would be about \$200,000.00—a figure primarily resulting from a more limited Clergy and the lack of expenses for a third building. He further noted that it is anticipated that in the second or third year of the new Congregation, there would be additional savings since staffing would likely be reduced through retirements and attrition. He added that Temples nearly always operate at a deficit since they are service industries. In response to questions from Committee members, he agreed that the cost to operate each building would be between \$75,000 and \$100,000 per year. Booker Kessler noted that the \$200,000.00 savings would not just be a one year benefit, but would be ongoing and was, therefore, a very significant number.

Following Alan Mirkin's explanations, each member of the Committee was asked to express their support or opposition to the proposed "Two-Temple Solution" as recommended by the Subcommittee. Among the salient comments were the following:

"We have to do something and that it was the best we can come up with".

"We absolutely have no choice but to act now, and that if new Rabbis are engaged by two of the Temples, it will push back future consolidation efforts for years"

"The use of two buildings is not his ideal but if we want to get something done, the proposed two building solution is the only way to go."

"The two building solution is the best option. As Churchill famously said "It is better to do something than nothing" and that eventually we will get to the unity we are seeking.

"While everyone agrees that choosing one building is better than two, he believes the Subcommittee did a good job of putting "more meat on the bones"

“Something is better than nothing but there is concern about getting that “right Rabbi” to serve two buildings.”

“The Subcommittee recommendation is not a perfect solution, but it is still a viable one, and like addressing climate change, we can’t wait until it is too late.”

“Deep gratitude goes to the Subcommittee for the detailed 11th hour effort they made in detailing how the Two-Temple option could work. It is the best path for going forward.”

“We owe it to the community to recommend something for our many months if not years of efforts and the Subcommittee recommendation is the best option. The recommendations will give the new board some “scaffolding” on which to build a new and stronger organization.”

“I can only support using one building, but I recognize that is a minority position.”

“Although the Architect recommended that El Emeth be the home of the new Congregation and this remains the preference of many, we should still support the Subcommittees recommendation since there is insufficient support for a one building choice.”

“Although choosing the two-temple option is “kicking the can down the road” on a number of important issues, the reality is that the two-temple option is the only solution available and deserves support.”

Mark Huberman reaffirmed his support for the “Two-Temple Solution” as the best and only viable option for all the reasons set forth by nearly every Committee member. He reminded the Committee of the rare and historic window of opportunity we have by the terming out of the contracts of our respective Rabbis, the undeniable declines in membership, Temple attendance, community leadership, and rising deficits we are all experiencing that compel our efforts.

At the conclusion of all comments, Mark Huberman noted that since nearly all members of the Committee expressed their support for the Subcommittee’s recommendation of the “Two Temple Solution”, the question that remains is the process for going forward in terms of seeking Board and Congregational approval. He suggested that each Temple Board be asked to schedule a special Board meeting next week to vote on the proposal, and if approved, to then schedule a Special Congregational meeting and/or Town Hall. After input from each member, and in particular, a discussion about the need and timing of the Town Hall, Mark Huberman’s proposal was agreed to. It was further agreed that Mark Huberman, Elliot Legow and Lee Burdman should offer to attend each Board Meeting in question to answer any questions about the proposal.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.