



Vassar Temple

Where You Belong

August 13, 2014

Paul Golomb
Rabbi

Elisa Dugatkin
Cantorial Soloist

Dr. Joel M. Hoffman
Religious School Director

Rabbi Stephen A. Arnold
Rabbi Emeritus

Temple Officers & Trustees
Robert Ritter
President

Jennifer Dahnert
1st Vice President

Susan Karnes Hecht
2nd Vice President

Jeff Brenner
Treasurer

Finance
Sam Finnerman

Len Greenberg
Secretary

Robert Abrams
Immed. Past President

Sam Finnerman
Tom Frankel
Alan Kaflowitz
Ben Krevolin
Mark Metzger
Amy Horn Oclatis
Roni Stein
Melissa Wall
Hilary Wrobel
Nadine Zaritsky

Laura Brundage
Danah Moore
Sisterhood Co- Presidents

Rachel Marcus
Youth Group President

David Samson
David Wolf
Men's Club Co-Presidents

Dear Fellow Congregant:

This letter concerns a subject which deserves your immediate awareness and just happens to fall at about the same time of the year as the holidays; however, please don't confuse this correspondence with the President's traditional High Holiday Appeal, as it is not a request for funds.

We believe it is important to inform you about matters which the Temple's House Committee, Finance Committee, Executive Officers, and Board are addressing at this time.

Our beloved Temple building requires capital expenditures which are significant. Given the age of our building that is not so unusual. Your question might be "why now?" We will address that too.

As many of you know, the lower level of our building has a natural tendency to flood during heavy rain and large winter melt-offs. In our lower level are essential spaces including our social hall, rest rooms, kitchen, classrooms, boiler room, and storage spaces. It is imperative that we do not lose the use of these spaces.

The combination of storms, wear and tear, and deferred maintenance has taken its toll on our building's ability to keep the water out. As a result, water entering the building has damaged parts of our interior, and a problem with mold and mildew developed. The situation has reached the point where we cannot keep up with problems on a "maintenance" basis. "Capital improvements" are needed to bring our building back up to standards. This is work that must be done now, but these capital improvements will benefit our congregational home for many years to come.

It is unfortunate that the timing is so soon after our major boiler project and more recent A/C system expenditures. Our capital funds have been depleted, and we haven't had sufficient time to build them back up through members' capital fund dues. Fortunately, we have ways to fund this work which are fiscally sound, addressed later in this letter. To delay the needed work would have worse effects on our building's ability to serve us and ultimately our Temple's viability. Letting the structure decline further is not acceptable.

140 Hooker Avenue
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
845 454 2570
845 452 5161 Fax
www.vassar temple.org

The Board of Trustees believed the decision to abate the mold could not be delayed. Fortunately, we were beginning the summer and didn't need to use the classrooms. In May-June, with the help of our House Committee - including Alan Kflowitz and Chuck Stein - the Officers and Trustees reached the decision to contract with First Call Restoration, a local firm with special certifications, qualifications, and experience, to test for and abate mold. As a result, a substantial portion of the sheetrock and all the carpeting was removed in our downstairs classrooms. In addition, a small section of paneling around our rear emergency door was also removed. The contractor applied agents to treat the mold. As you would expect, the low level classroom was put out of use as a result.

In conjunction with, and even prior to, this action the House Committee and Officers had started to evaluate our options in order to mitigate future water damage. For obvious reasons, we don't want to refurbish our spaces without first implementing steps to keep the water out!

Meetings and discussions took place with engineers, architects, contractors, and knowledgeable temple members. In our regular Board, Executive, and Finance Committee meetings we have had ongoing updates regarding house matters. Below is a list of the current steps recommended by the House Committee and approved by the Finance and Executive Committees.

- Replace damaged and failing gutters on the east side entrance
- Inspect and clear drain lines serving our gutters and sump pumps in the lower level classrooms
- Install a back-up sump pump in existing sump pit in lower level classrooms
- Install a B-Dry system designed to capture and pump out ground water infiltrating our classroom foundation wall
- Install a new "Bilco" style basement door on the side entrance of the building
- Seal gaps in the roof of the exterior stairwell enclosure leading to the emergency exit in the classroom to prevent storm water from rushing in
- Replace removed sheetrock in the classroom with mildew resistant "Greenboard" and paint with mildew resistant paint; Greenboard is used in bathrooms, basements, and other areas where drywall may be subject to damp conditions, humidity, and occasional minor splashes of water (Temple volunteers will be doing this work)
- Replace paneling by social hall emergency exit door
- Replace removed carpeting with rubber (waterproof) interlocking tiles
- Regrade the ground along our side entrance walkway from the stairs to the side entrance in order to direct storm water away from our building so that it flows directly to the rear of our property (that is its general direction now, but there are some peaks and valleys which invite water to run down our basement wall and into the classroom)

Eventually we will take further steps to address the drainage problems we have in the rear of the building which affect our social hall. Options are being researched. Plans and costs need to be determined. But the problems with water in our social hall have been more manageable and do not prevent us from using either the social hall or kitchen, whereas the front half of the building, where our classrooms and boiler are located, cannot wait.

The Finance Committee has carefully reviewed the scope of work and thoughtfully considered the best means of paying for it. It is the Finance Committee's judgment that we should not impose either a special assessment or a dues increase for the items on the above list. We believe it is preferable to use funds from our Building Fund and, for the remainder which cannot be covered, to arrange a loan from EITHER a lending institution or our own endowment funds.

The Officers of the Temple have decided to pursue a loan from the endowment to fund these capital improvements. We can pay ourselves a reasonable interest rate which is MORE than the endowment is earning on its cash, and still save money compared with bank rates. The loan is expected to be approximately \$19,000 with an initial interest rate of 4.5%. Principal repayments will amortize over 15 years with no prepayment restrictions, and the interest rate will be adjusted every 5 years to reflect what the endowment would normally earn.

The Finance Committee is deeply aware that the physical structure of the synagogue is a foundational sacred vessel that provides the material basis and "holding" of a segment of our spiritual energy, a container as much as our very own hearts and bodies. Just as we are both commanded and guided to maintain our own physical personal vessels, so too must we maintain and repair the very building that brings us together and allows for communion and connection.

Repairing the building now and paying for it in the most sound and prudent manner is common sense; it is also a sacred act.

If you have questions about the proposed financial arrangements or any other matters of the synagogue's finances, please do not hesitate to contact either one of us directly.

Respectfully,
Sam Finnerman
Finance Chair
(845) 454-1444
sam@hudsoncommercial.com

Bob Ritter
President
(845) 902-8481
bob_ritter1@yahoo.com