

Kahal B'raira's Summit Committee's Strategic Direction Plan

A. Background

Kahal B'raira (KB) is facing some significant challenges. We are optimistic that with planning, patience and hard work, KB can meet these challenges and thrive. Our work over the past year and the implementation of our preliminary recommendations have already born fruit and given us additional hope. This Strategic Plan, the SC's final report, is to serve as a blueprint for future changes within KB. It should be considered a guide, responsive to changing circumstances.

The Executive Committee (EC) formed the Summit Committee (SC) in April 2005 and we starting meeting in May 2005. Members include: Phil Katz (chair), Ellen Forman (vice-chair), Paula Wolk, P.A.M. Speirings, Gladys Maged, Shari Gelber, Richard Gelber, Barry Jaffee, Elaine Kamienny, Jon Levine and recently Jerry Rubin. Ellen Richstone and Sunny Schwartz have been working over e-mail.

The SC held the first Summit on June 6, 2005 - on a beautiful Father's Day afternoon, 33 members attended! That alone gives one "faith" in the power of our congregation to solve problems.

The SC produced its Preliminary Report in October 2005, recommending short-term action items and long-term discussion items. After releasing it to the congregation, the EC approved the Preliminary Report.

The SC, meeting every 4 weeks or so, started implementing the short-term action items and talked more about the long-term discussion items. We presented a draft of this report to the congregation on April 9, 2006. We then held a second Summit for interested congregants on the afternoon of May 7. This report was then approved and accepted by the EC on May 17, 2006.

B. The Issues

At the June 2005 Summit, the congregants outlined four main challenges affecting KB

1. Budget Deficiencies
2. Declining membership and school enrollment
3. Gaps in follow-through, ownership of work
4. Concerns about member satisfaction/dissatisfaction

The first three are fairly straightforward. The final challenge of member satisfaction appears in many areas, including: separation of adults and kids that discourages involvement/retention of early-teens and their families (e.g., not having kids familiar with liturgy, songs); lack of identity, vision, inspiration, creativity/change; non-Jews feel devalued; not enough varied opportunities (seniors, adult ed, social component).

We believe that the volunteer experience is integral to how people experience KB – our impressions of organization, support, expectations, communication, follow-through, etc. influences the perceived value of KB. Early experiences define members' understanding of KB's culture and influences our level of investment in, and ownership of, KB.

In ten years, the SC would like to see KB be a financially secure congregation that has a place to call home and more successfully serves the needs of a wide range of members. We should be a widely recognized and integral institution in the Jewish community and increase the visibility of Humanistic Judaism in the Greater Boston area.

The SC recognizes that neither the adoption of this plan, nor the EC's work alone, will lead to effective implementation. We will need significant community involvement and commitment to successfully realize these recommendations. We will need to educate and organize our membership and encourage their active participation.

C. Changes Implemented to Date

Most of the short-term recommendations the SC made in the Preliminary Report have been successfully initiated. Those recommendations are discussed below though in a restructured format. Work needs to continue as noted.

1. Train and Support Committee Chairs.

We have started a more pro-active approach to helping our Committee Chairs. This has included designating EC members as liaisons to each committee. This should continue and reinvigorate it. The EC should also encourage committee chairs to attend EC meetings when appropriate as the wider perspective and improved communication can prove invaluable.

Two years ago the All-Chairs event was started to bring together committee chairs, to acknowledge and celebrate their work, establish a set of expectations and guidelines, and support leadership development. The EC needs to better organize the event, clarify desired outcomes and encourage attendance in the future.

2. Expand membership categories

The EC has piloted a "Friend of KB" membership category for the years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007. The EC needs to decide by March 2007 whether to continue it as is, modify it or discontinue it. The EC should also look into the development of other member categories, such as Student, Young Adult and Benefactor.

3. Start fundraising appeals

An ad-hoc fundraising committee has implemented three times a year mail appeals as well as an enhanced request for donations at holiday services and for remembrances and life cycle messages in the newsletter. This has resulted in \$12,000 raised in the 6 months from September 2005 to February 2006. This should continue under the auspices of the Administration and Finance Committee.

4. Improve outreach efforts

The Outreach Committee has brought their work to a new level with a variety of new initiatives:

- paid advertising with WBUR in September and local newspapers for holidays and special programs
- free web listings in CJP, Shalom Boston and Craig's list
- updated literature for use during KB programs and outside events
- new "wine and cheese" introduction to Humanistic Judaism
- requests for referrals from current members
- free publicity in traditional media (getting events covered by local papers, letters to the editor, etc.)

We trust that the committee will creatively expand their efforts, including possible consultation with professionals as needed. In addition, it may prove useful for KB to have representatives sit on the Boards of various Jewish organizations to increase our visibility in the Jewish community.

5. Hold Open Houses

As part of our improved outreach, KB has held two open houses, in May 2005 and September 2005. These efforts, led by the Sunday School Committee and Principal, have been a successful draw to potential members. These events should continue under the auspices of the EC. The Open Houses should be expanded and promoted to also be Community Celebrations to encourage more congregational participation, get more involvement of the standing committees and to solicit members' contributions. The increased participation by our full congregation will also allow prospective members to meet our entire congregation.

6. Improve Membership Committee Procedures

More and better membership materials were available during the High Holidays. The Membership Committee needs to continue this effort and expand it to other holidays and Shabbat services. The Membership Committee has new procedures for prospective members, new members and members who are leaving. These procedures need to

be implemented, evaluated and refined. In addition, the Membership Committee needs to do more follow-up and collaborative work with the Outreach Committee and to evaluate new members' experience after a year as KB members. Finally, more work needs to be done to instill the expectation that it is everyone's responsibility to welcome and integrate new/prospective members.

7. Coordinate and Experiment with Sunday Meetings structure

The committees planning Sunday mornings have been experimenting with alternate structures for Sunday morning meetings. These include so far:

- Substituting Morning Music with story telling or class presentations (such as 3rd grade puppet show)
- Including the Sunday School students in adult programming where appropriate
- Creating continuity from morning service and discussion through the program
- Varying the programming among speakers, performers, small group discussions, full congregation conversations and more
- Working with speakers to ensure adequate congregational feedback and discussion.
- Holding off on serving food until the end of the morning and allowing extra time for socializing at the end of the day.

The committees planning Sunday mornings should continue this effort, asking for congregational input. Annually, the EC should review the structure and schedule of the Sunday mornings after obtaining input from all the committees involved: Sunday Service, Sunday Program, Music, Hospitality and Sunday School.

8. Establish an Interfaith Focus Group

An interfaith focus group has been meeting this year to discuss the special needs of members who come from other faith traditions, to support those members and to educate the rest of the congregation on the issues and ideas. The EC should continue to encourage and support the Interfaith Focus Group in its work, and expect reports from the Group when appropriate.

9. Logistical issues on meetings and internal communications

The EC continues to work to improve communication and our members' experience of events. This includes starting meetings on time, setting the expectation to arrive on time and resolving the frequent problem of running out of time. KB's website is being updated and coordinated for both our members and visitors. With a recent purchase of a presentation easel, we will better be able to post schedules, announcements of upcoming events, etc. In addition, each newsletter's table of contents is now included in the distribution e-mail. This work should continue and be enhanced.

D. Recommendations from the Preliminary Report Not Yet Completed

The following two recommendations were recommendations in the Preliminary Report. It is important to finish this work.

10. Finish Creation of Policy and Procedure Handbooks

The EC should continue to press for the development of a handbook (or handbooks) of procedures, policies, protocols, job descriptions, and timelines. These handbooks would be used by EC members, committee chairs and staff to ensure the smooth running of the congregation. This needs to be completed by June 2006 in order to help facilitate the next round of leadership change.

Projected completion date: June 2006
Progress Reports: Monthly to the President
Responsible Party: Gladys Maged and Barbara Gilvar

11. Create Service Book.

Work on a service book has started with the coordination of Paula Wolk and input from all our Madrikhim. This will bring a consistency in organization, content, order and pronunciation to our hamotze leaders, service leaders and readers. While this book is being assembled, it is a prime opportunity to make our language less exclusive of our congregants who come from other faith traditions, a recommendation that came out of the work of the already-established Interfaith Focus Group.

Projected completion date: Optimistically, Sept 2006; if not, Sept 2007

Progress Reports: May 2006

Responsible Party: Paula Wolk

E. Additional Recommendations

In our Preliminary Report, we proposed further discussion of long-term issues. Below is the SC's recommendation for further action.

12. Better allocate volunteer resources.

The majority of all the work done to lead and maintain KB and to provide services and programs, is done by our members as volunteers. Our by-laws call for all members to serve on a holiday committee and a standing committee. This has always been a valued part of KB. Serving on committees is part of building the fabric of the community, of helping individuals connect with the rest of the congregation.

In recent years, many members feel that their lives are busier and that it is harder to fulfill their volunteer commitment. Just as we offer scholarship membership to anyone who could not afford the full financial membership commitment, we would never want to turn away any member who could not volunteer due to extenuating circumstances. Fewer actively volunteering members hinders the work of the congregation, reduces the cooperative and participatory nature of KB and makes the volunteer experience stressful for all. The participation of our members, in its many forms, is the single greatest resource of our congregation and arguably the best way for new members to build meaningful relationships and thus membership in our community..

The essential question is whether KB can remain a cooperative where the majority of the work is done by volunteers and where an essential element of membership is volunteering. As we move towards more paid staff we may want to reduce or give up the volunteer requirement. At some point in the future, the EC and/or the membership should return to this question particularly as paid staff hours are increasing.

Until that time, the SC recommends that we maintain this important part of KB and make one modification: members who serve as a committee chair (either standing committee or holiday committee) need not serve on a second committee. In addition, the SC offers two basic ideas to modify and improve the ways in which we implement it: get the right amount of volunteer energy committed to the right tasks; and make the volunteer experience positive and use volunteer energies well. The details of these two ideas follow.

Getting the right amount of volunteer energy committed to the right tasks:

- Match member skills and interests with good volunteer assignments.
- Advertise and popularize volunteer opportunities and what's attractive about each.
- Create descriptions of committee work and minimum number of members needed.
- Track the volunteer needs of committees - neither too few or too many.
- Define minimum involvement for each committee - just going to a meeting or just reading at a service isn't enough, but what is?
- Integrate new members into committees by assisting them to actively explore and engage in the options rather than mandate them to be full committee members.

Making the volunteer experience positive and using volunteer energies well:

- Thank volunteers by writing a column in the newsletter (already begun), have the president mention outstanding volunteers during Sunday announcements, and holding the Volunteerapalooza (see recommendation #16)
- Collect feedback from volunteers each year in a survey at the time of the Volunteerapalooza.

- Train volunteers either in a fall training or by committee chairs
- Provide written committee descriptions and operating procedures

Projected completion date: Tentative changes by September 2007; Final Changes by September 2008

Progress Reports: Much can be included in the handbooks of recommendation #10, then quarterly reports to the EC
Responsible Party: Gladys Maged and Holiday Coordinator

13. Add two Sundays to our schedule.

The SC recommends that KB add two more Sunday School sessions to enhance our children's education. Next year the Sunday School is adding an 8th grade. Therefore, the SC suggests that this increase take place in 2007-2008. The additional time will also allow the Sunday School to carefully plan for the additional sessions, which might include:

- having more multi-class activities, plays and performances;
- allowing children to join the adults so as to become more familiar with our liturgy; and
- having increased time for music, Hebrew, and creative writing.

The adult programming for the two extra sessions should, of course, be determined by the committees planning Sunday morning. The SC suggests that some time be used for KB committee meetings and for small group meetings, such as parents, adults without kids, interfaith couples, etc. The SC further suggests that this increase of two additional sessions be considered the beginning of a long range plan to eventually have a total of 18 sessions.

Projected completion date: Sept 2007

Progress Reports: Oct 2006, Jan 2007, April 2007

Responsible Party: Sunday School Committee, Sunday Program Committee

14. KB's identity

KB needs a new statement of basic principles and purpose. KB has statements in our various publications and on our web site about Humanistic Judaism and our congregation. Now is the time to review these and amend or rewrite so that we can have one consistent description of our congregation. This new statement would allow us to communicate who we are to newcomers and prospective members.

Further, these statements have not been reviewed or discussed in quite a while so our membership may not be familiar with them, hasn't had an opportunity to affirm or modify them and doesn't use them as part of our work in the congregation. The process itself would also give us a stronger sense of ourselves, thereby strengthening the congregation and our services and programs.

Therefore, the SC recommends that the EC should establish an ad-hoc committee to undertake a 9-month process of study and discussion towards writing/updating a statement of principles for the congregation.

The SC suggests that the process begin with a series of educational programs as part of our Sunday mornings, Shabbats and adult education. Next, there could be opportunities for discussion in small and/or large groups. Allowing for give and take, this process can produce a general statement of our principles and still leave room and respect for the rich diversity of beliefs within the congregation.

Projected completion date: November 2007

Progress Reports: October 2006, January 2007, April 2007, September 2007

Responsible Party: Gladys Maged

15. Extend officers' terms to two years.

As KB becomes more efficient with its resources and is able to gain more paid staff, the role of the President should transform from managing operational details to delegating more and focusing more on vision, planning and direction. This model works better with a set of leaders with longer tenure. In addition, as more operational work is done by others a two-year term is more manageable. The SC recommends this change occur effective in the 2007-2008 year.

The two-year term has the drawback of potentially requiring a presidential candidate to perform six years of service: two years as President-Elect, two years as President and two years as Past-President. This is too long a commitment. In reality anyone who regularly attends EC meetings for a year could step into the role of president. Therefore, we also recommend that the Past President be expected to serve for only one year and President-Elect position be changed to a Vice-President position. The Vice President would run for this position with the idea of investigating the president's position but would be expected to commit to the presidency in his/her second year or else resign and let someone else run for the position who can make that commitment.

This change would necessitate by-law changes that should be voted on well before that election of officers for the 2007-2008 year. During this process, the SC recommends that the by-laws vacancy language be reviewed and amended if appropriate.

Projected completion date: March 2007, for an effective date of July 2007

Progress Reports: October 2006, January 2007

Responsible Party: Executive Committee (Phil Katz)

16. Volunteer Appreciation Night

KB depends on the volunteer efforts of its members working through committees to run the congregation. It is also one of our members' best opportunities to feel connected to our community and colors their experience of all of KB. We need to give our members orientation to and information about their contribution to KB. We also need to acknowledge their work and say thanks on behalf of the congregation. The All Chairs meeting in September begins the orientation cycle. The SC recommends that the EC add a volunteer night at the end of each KB year. We might call it a Volunteerpalooza. It would be open to everyone in KB and we would particularly encourage committee chairs (both holiday and standing committees) and very active committee members. It would be a celebratory evening and could include a wrap-up where people give suggestions for improving committee work in the next year. During this event we would also be able to identify potential new leaders of the congregation.

Projected completion date: First one to be held by June 2006

Progress Reports: April 2006

Responsible Party: Gladys Maged will present plan to EC

17. Fund-Raising event

The congregation attempts to cover all operating expenses by means of dues. Fund raising drives and periodic donation solicitations are meant to supplement operating expenses. We have been fortunate recipients of significant membership largesse.

The reality is most non-profits need to fundraise and if we want to professionalize our performance and ensure our viability we need to as well. Therefore, in addition to funding for everyday operating expenses, it would serve the congregation well to hold Fund Raising Events for expenses above and beyond the everyday operations. Should we ever want to create a building fund, a scholarship fund, a rainy day fund, or any other targeted objectives which may arise, the SC recommends that the Administration and Finance Committee initiate an annual Fund Raising Event for the benefit of the congregation's long-term objectives. In order to be most effective and accepted, this event needs to have low overhead expenses.

The EC and Social Action Committee need to coordinate this fundraiser with the annual Social Action fundraiser to avoid conflicts.

Projected completion date: Spring 2007

Progress Reports: September 2006, November 2006, January 2007

Responsible Party: Administration and Finance Committee

18. Paid Staff

We currently pay for the positions of an Administrator, Sunday School Principal, Youth Group Leader, Teachers and Aides. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Coordinator is paid through a grant as the program starts up and will be paid by participants as the program continues. The Family Shabbat Coordinator is also being funded by a grant.

We have received a new grant of \$20,000, \$17,000 of which has just begun to pay for both more hours for our Administrator and an additional position to help our Administrator. Eventually, this grant will be phased out and the costs must be borne within our operating budget. As we phase this work into our budget, the EC may want to think of combining some positions to create an Executive Director position.

In addition to the above, the SC recommends increasing our budget for more paid staff, to be determined on a year by year basis, as follows:

- We should pay our Madrikhim when we use them as Madrikhim. This would include, but not be limited to, time we use them for leading services, writing liturgy, performing adult education and consulting for services and holidays.
- We should budget for hiring music consultant(s) to work with our Music Committee, help with Sunday School, Sunday morning songs, and Shabbat and holiday services. The SC hopes that this work can evolve over time into a Music Director position.
- We should budget for the hiring of Judaica Consultants from time to time to help us with education, liturgy, history and Hebrew. The SC discussed the issue of hiring a rabbi and decided not to include this as part of our current recommendations for KB. This could be discussed further with the congregation as a whole.

Projected completion date: fully fund these positions by the 2009-2010 year

Progress Reports: as part of the quarterly budget updates to the EC

Responsible Party: Treasurer, EC and affected committees (Music, Sunday School, Shabbat, more)

19. Finding A Home

KB's vision for the future needs to include our physical surroundings. We need a secure home. Therefore, the SC recommends the creation of a Building Committee. This committee may review and possibly change and improve the facilities we currently rent for our programs and meetings. We might be able to reduce the number of different places we use for different purposes. The SC suggests that our future most likely includes establishing a place that is ours for use as an office, library, classroom and small meeting space. This type of space would be a great asset to staff and volunteers doing administrative work and would allow for more KB activities and programs. Establishing a KB space that is devoted to our use would also be a foothold on the path to a permanent home for KB that could hold our meetings and activities as well. This physical expression of KB goes hand and hand with the growth and development of the congregation.

Projected completion date: Ongoing

Progress Reports: Quarterly to the EC

Responsible Party: ad-hoc Building Committee which includes the Facilities Liaison

F. Budget Implications

There are major budget implications to many of these recommendations. While there is no way to provide more services and reduce the need for volunteers without increasing dues and tuition, this increase can be mitigated by increased membership and school enrollment as well as applying for additional grants from a variety of funding sources and fundraising as discussed above.

Below are the estimates of the cumulative increases in expenditure of the SC recommendations over 2005-2006 year (FY06) as originally budgeted. These are not year to year increases. These amounts are not indexed for inflation.

Recommendation	FY 07	FY 08	FY 09	FY 10
4. Improved Outreach	\$ 1,500	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000
5. Open House/Congregational Celebration	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
10. Handbooks	200	100	100	100
11. Service Book	1,000	300	300	300
13. Adding two Sundays	0	5,400	5,400	5,400
16. Volunteerapoloosa	600	600	600	600
18. Paid Staff *	17,000	20,000	24,000	24,000
19. Finding a Home				
a. Office Space	6,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
b. Building Fund	0	0	6,000	18,000
Total	\$ 27,500	\$ 42,600	\$ 52,600	\$ 64,600

* Paid Staff recommended over time includes: administration, Madrikim, music consultant(s), Judaica consultant(s)

These increased expenditures can be funded by many revenue sources:

- KB was extremely fortunate in FY06 to receive approximately \$30,000 in grants (that were not in our original budget) for our transition to paid staff and other programming. While we intend to apply for these grants again, it is prudent to phase in the absorption of these grants into the operating budget.
- With additional staff we can apply for more grants.
- As we institutionalize our fund-raising efforts, we can expect our donations to increase, even surpassing the \$12,000 collected in the first half of 2005-2006.
- As we increase our outreach efforts and make our membership work more efficient, we can expect to gain more members and students.
- Finally, we would expect that there would be some increases in membership dues and Sunday School tuition.

The expected level of grants, membership and school enrollment, and dues and tuition each year is set during the annual budget cycle. Budgets are proposed by the Administration and Finance Committee, accepted by the EC and approved by the congregation every spring. As dues increase, the membership should be made aware of how important the work of our paid staff is and the dues level of other congregations in the Boston area.

The chart below is a rough estimate of our expectation for increase membership and dues and tuition to pay for the increased budget above.

Fiscal Year	Budget	Increase	Family Members	Family Dues	Individual Members	Individual Dues	Student FTEs*	Tuition	Other Income**
2006	\$82,800	-	58	\$ 700	28	\$ 390	41	\$ 360	\$16,520
2007	110,300	\$27,500	61	800	31	440	45	390	30,310
2008	125,400	15,100	65	900	35	490	51	420	28,330
2009	135,400	10,000	70	1,000	40	540	59	450	17,250
2010	147,400	12,000	75	1,100	45	590	67	480	6,190

* Student FTE based on the tuition of each student, adjusted to reflect the tuition of grades 1-7, currently at \$360. (For instance, a youth group members paying \$240 is considered a 0.67 FTE.)

** Other income includes donations, grants, interest, holiday income and program fees

G. Conclusions

With energy and diligence, many KB members have rallied to address the multiple issues challenging our community's vitality. This report demonstrates what we have done, and what we will need to do, to address the budget deficiencies, declining school enrollment, gaps in procedures and follow-through and member dissatisfaction. We will need to continue to educate and organize our membership and encourage their active participation and commitment. We will also need to be thoughtful each year about what we can realistically manage and afford.

It is our intention that with continued perseverance we can achieve our vision: KB as a financially secure congregation that has a place to call home and more successfully serves the needs of a wide range of members. Using this strategic direction plan as a blueprint and guide, we expect KB will become a widely recognized and integral institution in the Jewish community and increase the visibility of Humanistic Judaism in the Greater Boston area.