

# Responsibilities, Duties and Expectations of the Board of Trustees of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

## *Section 1: Overview*

The Constitution and By-laws broadly outlines the division of authority for both long-term strategic decisions and day to day operations between the Officers, Executive Committee, Board of Trustees and the Members of the congregation.

In addition to the constitutionally mandated decision-making, there is an expectation that Trustees will be leaders of the community giving their time, energy and expertise to promoting both the Bayit in general and specific programs, activities and fundraisers to the members and reaching out to new arrivals to welcome them to the community.

There is no set annual donation expectation for trustees. This allows the Bayit to ensure a diverse group of trustees that reflect the diversity of our membership – age, gender, profession, religious/Jewish education, marital and family status (single, married, widowed, divorced; newlyweds, empty-nesters, young families, single parents, etc). Leading by example and supporting the Bayit in a manner consistent with each trustee's resources is an integral part of ensuring the long-term success of the synagogue.

The Constitution and By-laws were last updated in 2012. The division and assignment of powers reflects both the mandates of the NYS Religious Corporation Law and the values and culture of our community.

## *Section 2: Authority and Responsibility of the Board of Trustees as set in by-laws:*

- Ultimate decision making body and authority for the administration of the congregation – buying and selling property, setting dues/fees, authorizing payment of bills. In practice, the professional staff, officers and executive committee are charged with managing the day-to-day activities under guidelines established by the Board of Trustees.
- Strategic decisions that require Board discussion and approval – fees for membership and High Holiday seats, rental and lease agreements and any capital improvements/changes to the physical plant.
- Temporary hiring of spiritual leaders - The Executive Committee may hire an assistant spiritual leader for a period of up to 1 year. *The Board of Trustees must approve the continuation of an assistant spiritual leader for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year.* If the Board of Trustees votes to recommend the continuation of an assistant spiritual leader past year 2, the approval of the entire membership is required.
- The hiring of the Senior Rabbi or Spiritual leader requires the approval of the membership. The membership meeting/vote is called after the Board of Trustees approves a candidate.
- Suspension (and lifting of suspension) or Expulsion of members, subject to a super-majority vote.

- In general, any strategic decision that affects the long-term operations of the Bayit should be discussed and approved by the board.
- Specifically, any expenditure not included in the annual budget can be approved by the Board of Trustees – up to a limit of \$50k (the president has authority to spend up to \$5k for a non-budget expense and the executive committee up to \$25k).
- Sale or purchase of real estate must be approved by the Board of Trustees and then submitted to the membership for approval.

### *Section 3 – General Expectations, Duties and Responsibilities*

- Sounding board – even when the Rabbinic Staff, officers and executive committee have decision making authority on a particular matter, in the interest of transparency and community building they may seek the advice and consent of the full Board of Trustees. [Example: while the Executive Committee had the authority to hire Rabba Anat for 1 year, the Board of Trustees was asked to discuss and vote on the use of the title “Rabba.”]. Even when not solicited, the voices of our Trustees are sought. Please share your feelings and opinions with our staff and leadership about what takes place in our Bayit and how we can do better in serving our community.
- Leadership opportunities – throughout the year volunteers are needed to be event chairs or committee members for planning events. Board members are the natural people to take on these roles (though Board membership is not required). Many of our signature events happen and succeed because someone steps into a leadership/planning role: Friday Night Tent, Blood Drive, Clothing Drive, Annual Dinner, Thanksgiving Dinner, Youth Committee. There are always more opportunities to get involved and expand our social and fundraising programs.
- Bayit “Ambassadors” – Trustees are the elected leaders of the synagogue.
  - Greeting and engaging visitors, new Riverdale residents and new members is a critical factor in growing our membership and maintaining our reputation as an open and welcoming community. Inviting new community members for Shabbat and holiday meals is a particularly important and impactful opportunity and expectation from our Trustees.
  - Maintaining contact with existing members to nurture and strengthen their relationship to the community. As our membership grows, this is essential to keeping the spirit and warmth of a “small synagogue.”
  - This role has assigned tasks such as calling members before the High Holidays and informal tasks such as greeting and engaging with newcomers and visitors coming into the building.
  - Attending regular and special events – Trustees uphold the Bayit’s values by participating actively in its activities. Regular attendance at weekday and Shabbat/holiday tefillot, participating in learning opportunities, and supporting programming around the calendar year remind our membership and the greater community that these events are designed for all of us.

- Leadership by example – Trustees set the tone for how people act in services, around the building, relating to staff and financial support.
  - Treat all staff with respect on the phone and in person - Bayit staff – rabbinic team, programming, youth, administrative and maintenance love working here because our community creates a great work environment. Trustees have a role to play in maintaining the positive atmosphere.
  - Maintaining the physical environment – as a community we are always working to better enforce policies that were put in place to ensure the safety of children and adults, protect personal and synagogue property and maintain the decorum and spirituality of services. Trustees set an essential example and standard by supervising children, respecting requests to keep emergency exits clear and maintaining our policies regarding alcohol, ball-playing, use of Bayit facilities, etc.