

Many members will have already heard the great news that the First Narayever Congregation was fully successful in our appeal to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (formerly the Ontario Municipal Board). We were granted all of the variances requested to undertake the necessary renovations to make accessible for *all* of our members the sanctuary, shul offices, social hall and a proposed 2nd floor office and study for Rabbi Elkin.

The Tribunal found that our building has been used by the Congregation continuously as a place of worship since 1943 and as such enjoys legal non-conforming use status. This meant that the key question before the Tribunal was whether the addition of an elevator and the other proposed renovations would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding area.

The Tribunal relied on statements in the City of Toronto's Official Plan that places of worship "play an important role in the rhythm of daily life in Neighbourhoods". It agreed that our proposals "both individually and cumulatively, meet the requirements under [the *Planning Act*] . . . has regard for matters of provincial interest: is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement; conforms with the Growth Plan; is, from a planning and public interest point of view, desirable for the appropriate development and use of the subject property; and will have no unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding area".

I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to lawyer Ron Kanter of the firm Macdonald, Sager, Manis LLP for agreeing to act for the Narayever and for donating his considerable expertise, legal skill and experience on our behalf.

Special thanks also to Antonio Volpentesta (planner) Jana Levitt (architect), Ali Engel-Yan, Gary Lichtblau, and Elizabeth Bohnen (shul members), each of whom gave evidence on behalf of Congregation. As well, a big thank you to the members of the Building Renewal Steering Committee who have worked tirelessly on this project and have exhibited the patience of Job.

Our project still has one final requirement to clear: a Heritage Impact Assessment approval from the City of Toronto. This will ensure the renovation preserves as much as possible the historical nature of our building, which we all value greatly.

What are our next steps? In no particular order they are as follows:

First, and most importantly, we require the approval of the Congregation to proceed with the renovation. We will be calling a Special General Meeting (SGM) at which the membership will vote on whether to proceed with the project.

Second, the Board of Governors will meet shortly to decide on the order in which to proceed. For example, the Board will have to decide whether it is best to obtain the required Heritage Impact Assessment approval before, or after, the SGM.

Third, the Board will likely decide whether to wait for the SGM to kick fundraising into high gear or to seek pledges of financial contributions from the membership before the SGM so that the Congregation has the most up-to-date financial information before it votes.

We will, of course, keep you advised of all of these next steps in the Narayever Net and in upcoming newsletters.

Hart Schwartz  
Co-President