



TEMPLE ETZ CHAIM

temple-etzchaim.org

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Greetings,

We hope this message finds our community doing well, having endured quite a bit over the past couple of years. It has been altogether too long since you have heard from our Building Committee and have rightfully been wondering what the status is. We write this letter with the hope of offering both some clarity and explanation, but first by beginning with a most sincere apology. Thus, while this message may be lengthy, we do hope you take a few minutes to read it or listen to this recording.

Over the past several months, there have been a variety of professional, personal, and family challenges that have made prioritizing the work of a new Temple building, given the scope and magnitude, completely overwhelming. We also lost significant momentum with the onset of the pandemic, which brought with it a number of challenges in terms of our Committee and the logistics of moving to the next phase of construction. In addition, the silent phase of the project, which involved soliciting bids and reaching out to prospective contractors, underscored many of the challenges that our congregation and others in a similar situation could potentially experience. Inflation, labor costs, raw material availability, and even the lack of companies bidding on projects all resulted in a perfect storm where we were left to refocus efforts in different directions. The pre-pandemic estimates for the building, which ranged between \$1-2 million, have more than doubled, which has likewise resulted in some reconsiderations, particularly in looking at the best use of our current campus and resources of land.

Last spring, summer, and fall, we developed very detailed scopes of work, bid documents, and walkthrough schedules. We did receive some interest from contractors and companies, but their budgets far exceeded our capacity. This brought us back to rethinking both the financial and logistical context of the project. This process concluded in November, followed by outreach to additional companies. At that time, we identified a builder, with whom we were prepared to enter into more direct negotiations, but even his advice as recently as this March was for us to remain patient given the dynamics of the construction market at present.

עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה

... IT IS A TREE OF LIFE TO THOSE WHO HOLD IT FAST...



In short, we were not updating the congregation because the lack of specifics made it difficult to gauge what was appropriate to share. In hindsight, we should have been more transparent with the intermediate steps of the process, even as there were several weeks of quiet time, which turned into months. We regret not sharing more or providing much action, but also do not know how much more there was to communicate. Without getting into too much detail, we also feel as though our Committee engaged dialogue and balanced a number of commitments to our personal, professional, and community lives, particularly since none of us are professional fundraisers.

Some folks may be understandably wondering about the status of their pledges or donations to this campaign. The terms of the donations were that the funds raised in this particular campaign can be used only for the building; thus, we have not used any new resources, nor have we actively sought payment or solicited new donations while we have been engaged in the dialogue with prospective builders. For those who have already donated, the generosity is appreciated and rest assured that those funds will be put to the use for which they were donated. All funds remain in escrow until the Temple votes to expend them specifically for the designated purpose of building.

We are now at the critical juncture of hitting reset on this process, which means a few important steps will be forthcoming, including:

1. Determining if a renovation and build project is an option or advantage over new construction
2. Revising the capital budget
3. Potentially revising bids based on a changed scope of project
4. Ensuring that current pledges are appropriately utilized
5. Most importantly, resetting trust and enthusiasm with our congregation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks once wrote: "Hope is the ability to combine aspiration with patience; to be undeterred by setbacks and delays; to have a sense of the time it takes to effect change in the human heart; never to forget the destination even in the midst of exile and disaster." We continue to be committed, undeterred, focused, and hopeful in the pursuit of our collective destination. We likewise hope that our congregation will join in that effort, and we look forward to building together, metaphorically and literally, in the coming years.

With sincerity,

The Temple Etz Chaim Building Committee

Michael Rubin, Chair

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