

Congregation Beth Shalom 2019 Strategic Plan: Leadership and Volunteerism Task Force Report

June 2019

Task Force Members

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Process Overview

We formed the Leadership and Volunteerism Task Force in February 2019 and met four times between February and the end of April. Our mandate was to review relevant data and inputs, develop a vision statement and strategic objectives, and identify a series of actions to help Beth Shalom achieve these objectives over the next five years.

Our in person meetings were structured as follows:

1. Introduction and visioning (Feb 21)
2. Context setting and strategic objectives (March 5)
3. Actions brainstorming using “PACT” framework (April 2)
4. Actions review and exemplar materials (April 28)

Key inputs to our Task Force included inputs from earlier strategic plan meetings with the Board of Trustees, the congregational survey, and conversations with members, Trustees, and staff. Each Task Force member also provided individual input via an onboarding survey. Finally, we reviewed the current Board and committee structure and membership, congregational bylaws, and other volunteer activities across the organization, and also looked at a range of best practices and exemplars from other synagogues and nonprofits.

We used “the wave” in Meetings 1 and 2 to help set the current context. This represented a convenient way to consider the following questions:

- what else do we currently have in place that can create momentum towards our emerging vision(s)?
- what challenges do we currently face that work against this vision?

connections to staff. There is a similar lack of understanding regarding how other volunteers are connected to or supported by synagogue leadership.

Leadership pipeline: There is no clear route of succession for how someone might become involved in the shul, increasingly taking on larger roles as they learn more about the synagogue's functioning. Nor is there an effective way for people to roll out of leadership.

Size of Board: The Board of Trustees is too large for effective conversations and meaningful participation in shul work. There are currently many more positions than people available to fill them.

Transparency: The Board's work happens behind closed doors, there are no publicly available records of board meetings, and the only contact most members have with the Board or Board Members is at the annual election or announcements at the end of shul. This touches on many of the other areas, resulting in confusion regarding board roles, responsibilities, how to engage, volunteer opportunities, and who is actually on the Board.

Bylaws: Our current bylaws need to be reviewed, revised, and likely simplified. Over the years, necessary changes have been added which may or may not be currently relevant. Sometimes the complexity of the Bylaws works to impede the smooth functioning of the Board and synagogue. Their purpose is to provide a guideline that will ensure that we remain viable into the future, not to be overly prescriptive and inflexible as we head into our next decade.

A lack of job descriptions for volunteer roles and leadership positions.

Difficulty connecting members to volunteer positions and opportunities: Members either do not know what volunteer service is needed in the synagogue, or are unwilling to volunteer. This results in a relatively small number of volunteers filling a large majority of volunteer roles.

Communication between staff and volunteers: There is frustration that moves in both directions. For example, volunteers may not have accurate ideas of staff roles or time availability, and staff may sometimes not be responsive or even know who volunteers are or feel empowered to work with volunteers.

Task Force Observations

Meaningful changes to existing structures can be difficult. We observed that the existing structure is based upon the synagogue's context twenty to thirty years ago, and conditions both at Beth Shalom and in Pittsburgh are now significantly different. Yet, change to a new structure will not be easy because people (leaders and members alike) often become attached to "how things were done." This can lead to some resistance by influential and generous people who have contributed immensely to the shul and community over the years.

As a result, the process must be geared towards incorporating a broad perspective, ensuring success through consensus while acknowledging the important role and critical work of leaders

who have contributed their time, talents and dollars to create our remarkable synagogue community. Their knowledge and perspective must be honored as we review and simplify our bylaws, revise our board, committee and volunteer structures, and create training materials for volunteers and leaders.

The Task Force spent significant time proposing realistic solutions and next steps for each of these “problems.” Our vision and recommendations can be found below.

Vision for Leadership and Volunteerism

We envision a continuum of synagogue leadership that flows from the newest members to the president, with opportunities for meaningful participation at every level. Leaders and volunteers share responsibility effectively across all aspects of synagogue operations. We embrace accountability, communicate effectively, and make transparent and informed decisions. The synagogue’s leadership reflects our diversity and breadth of experience and helps volunteers find personally relevant roles. Contributing to synagogue life strengthens bonds among congregants and builds collective ownership in the success of the institution.

Our vision is inspired by Yitro’s guidance to Moses (Exodus 18:18; 21-22): “...the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone...You shall provide from among all the nation people of valor, who fear God, people of truth, who despise unjust gain...so that they might make it easier for you and bear the burden with you.”

Strategic Objectives and Proposed Actions

Objective 1. Create a new Board and Executive Committee structure to enable a representative, functional, efficient, and transparent lay leadership team. Each Board Member will oversee a specific area of synagogue operations, and the Board as a whole will share collective responsibility for management and decision making.

Action What?	Capacity Who? How much? How complex?	Timeframe When?
Restructure the Executive Committee to better share leadership responsibilities. Each officer would take on a designated area of responsibility and serve as the central point of contact for staff and members (see strawman proposal).	This effort would be led by the new Board and Executive Committee. The complexity is high, especially related to transition and timing. This will likely be a sensitive conversation, so it will make most sense to hold it in conjunction with a seasoned facilitator with significant nonprofit knowledge.	Planning / moderated conversations in Year 1. Implementation in Year 2, with the goal of adopting a new structure at the start of Year 3.
Determine optimal Board size for best practice and maximum effect (see strawman proposal).	Board and Executive Committee and in collaboration with facilitator described in following section.	Planning / moderated conversations in Year 1. Implementation in Year 2, with the goal of adopting a new

		structure at the start of Year 3.
Determine best practice to honor former Executive Committee Members, Board Members, and Committee Members and to enable them to provide knowledgeable and useful guidance while still allowing current Board and officers to function smoothly.	Board and Executive Committee and in collaboration with facilitator described in following section.	Planning / moderated conversations in Year 1. Implementation in Year 2, with the goal of adopting a new structure at the start of Year 3.
Establish protocol for Board transparency that could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Board meetings; • Posting materials online for congregant review; • Holding working congregational meetings to meaningfully engage community in upcoming issues and decision making. 	Board Executive Committee and Executive Director; cost of hosting and publicizing meetings; establishing a protocol could take some thought, but once put into practice should be able to engender significantly more involvement.	Year 1 and ongoing
Create new bylaws to support the new Board and committee structures and provide adequate flexibility for changing times.	Systematic review and restructure of the bylaws by lay leaders with legal background and training. Flexible and short, not long and highly detailed/specific. Because we can call on internal talent, this should not cost anything other than time. One near-term option would be to identify a small ad hoc committee in Year 1 to determine what can be implemented from the strategic plan within existing bylaws, and what actions would require bylaw changes.	New bylaws to be drafted within 18 months and adopted before Year 3 begins.

Objective 2. Reform the structure of Standing and Ad Hoc Committees with the goal of creating a smaller number of functional, goal-based committees. Each committee will have a clear relationship with the Board, support from synagogue staff, and defined areas of responsibility. Committees will represent the synagogue’s diverse membership, provide opportunities for all levels of volunteerism and participation, and address ongoing synagogue needs.

Action What?	Capacity Who? How much? How complex?	Timeframe When?
<p>Assess needs and gaps for all synagogue committees through a moderated workshop including both the Board and professional staff. This process could also include clarifying best practices for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Executive Committee role & duties ● Committee membership term limits ● Committee Chair responsibilities ● Committee Member recruitment 	<p>Board and Executive Committee led, staff supported, using an outside moderator who has a good understanding of the unique needs of a synagogue nonprofit structure. Because this could be a sensitive conversation and there is so much involved in making the right strategic decisions, it could wind up costing between \$10,000 to \$20,000 if done properly.</p> <p>Alternately, this could be led by experts within the Beth Shalom community willing to volunteer their time. Beth Shalom could also ask USCJ to support this effort through the Sulam initiative.</p>	<p>The need for this process should be discussed immediately, and an appropriate moderator and process should be identified within the first 6 months, with conversations being held within the first year.</p>
<p>Restructure the standing and ad-hoc committees to align with the best practice identified during the facilitated discussion and new Board structure.</p>	<p>This effort would be led by the current Executive Committee and Board. The complexity is high, especially related to transition and timing.</p>	<p>Planning / moderated conversations in Year 1. Implementation in Year 2, with the goal of adopting a new structure at the start of Year 3.</p>

Objective 3. Clearly define the responsibilities and objectives for all lay leadership roles and empower synagogue leadership at all levels by providing leaders with the training and tools needed to fulfill their objectives.

Action What?	Capacity Who? How much? How complex?	Timeframe When?
<p>Establish a pathway to experienced leadership. This would extend from volunteer, to volunteer leader or committee member, to Board Member, to Board officer. This new pathway would encourage people to become involved in specific shul-related events or tasks and to learn more about how the synagogue functions prior to joining the Board. It would also provide for Board Members to build knowledge and skills prior to assuming officer roles. The pathway would be operationalized in a guidebook or other written summary, perhaps combined with the next action below.</p>	<p>This will rely upon Officers, Board Members, and Committee Chairs (particularly Nominating Committee) executing a cultural change so that shul members recognize that there is an anticipated path to leadership. Success will depend upon whether we are able to increase volunteer involvement that generates emerging leaders. Some educational / leadership development investments in emerging leaders might be necessary, but the cost should primarily be in time and patience.</p>	<p>Beginning immediately and ongoing. Results may begin to be seen within 2 to 4 years.</p>
<p>Review and create Board Member and Committee Member job descriptions and expectations. These would describe the role, time commitment, financial commitment, and expected or required attendance at synagogue services and events.</p>	<p>Board Members and Committee Members under the guidance of Executive Committee and Committee Chairs.</p> <p>The Board would establish a template for this guidance and provide it to the appropriate Committee Chairs (see exemplar later in this report).</p> <p>Once the new committee structure is in place and appropriate templates developed, this should be a relatively direct and quick task.</p>	<p>After new committee structure is established so between Years 2 and 3. These would be reviewed and updated every 2 years, with every committee asked to refresh its own guidance.</p>

<p>Establish a training protocol and create training materials for Board and committee members. This would also include written guidance for volunteer leaders to run different types of activities and events at Beth Shalom, either in web-accessible or guidebook form.</p> <p>Relatedly, keep an archive of this guidance to support a smooth handoff of volunteer leader responsibilities as lay leaders move into different roles.</p>	<p>These would be developed by the Executive Committee, standing committees, or volunteer leaders as appropriate, with every leader responsible for developing some basic materials.</p> <p>Beth Shalom could use copious online resources to create Board / committee training manuals for onboarding new members. Could also draw on USCJ support (e.g., Sulam for Current Leaders).</p> <p>This will take time, but does not require a budget.</p>	<p>Year 1 and 2 for existing activities run by volunteer leaders.</p> <p>Years 2 and 3 for the Board and standing committees, once the revised structure is established.</p> <p>These materials would be reviewed and updated by the appropriate committee every 2 years.</p>
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Objective 4. Provide volunteer opportunities and support resources to all members, and reach out to new or less engaged members to understand their interests and skills and encourage them to volunteer in a specific capacity.

Action What?	Capacity Who? How much? How complex?	Timeframe When?
<p>Ask each member of the synagogue to volunteer at least once per year. Consider using Yom Kippur and membership renewal as an opportunity to ask for volunteer commitments towards specific goals in addition to the traditional financial request.</p>	<p>This does not require a budget. It would require collaboration with the Rabbi to discuss incorporating this into the Yom Kippur ask and an associated handout/postcard for synagogue attendees on the holiday itself. This would also involve a rewrite of the membership letter.</p>	<p>Implement at Yom Kippur (Year 2) and next membership renewal cycle.</p>
<p>Develop an accessible volunteer database using modern customer relationship management (CRM) software. This database could also address member engagement needs (including individual members and volunteers) and should include a record of members who have</p>	<p>Requires a volunteer to select a CRM (or use even more basic software) and set it up to begin feeding data. There are free/very low cost software solutions available that should not require budget.</p>	<p>Complete database development by end of Year 1</p>

<p>expressed interest in volunteering in different areas, track who has volunteered for what (and at what frequency), and provide a record of attendance at synagogue events to help identify potential new volunteers.</p>	<p>Staff would need to be trained to update the database to better track membership involvement.</p>	
<p>Develop a new “volunteer matchmaker” position for a single lay leader or new volunteer coordination committee. This job would entail connecting volunteer leaders with current or potential volunteers, building on the strong and diverse relationship networks present across the synagogue. This role would be supported by the new volunteer database.</p>	<p>Identify a volunteer to kick off this effort. Could be designated to a member of the board.</p> <p>No budget is required.</p>	<p>Develop committee or position description during Year 1; implement in Years 1-2.</p>
<p>Consider providing additional in-person training session (volunteer orientation) and/or a regular volunteer open house or “volunteer fair.” This would provide information to new or newly engaged members about volunteering opportunities and resources.</p>	<p>Would require lay leadership to develop training that would entice and engage new volunteers. Events could be done in tandem or separately, and each would require a small event budget (\$500).</p>	<p>Hold the first orientation or open house in the first 12-18 months.</p>

Objective 5. Establish new processes and best practice for the interface between synagogue staff and lay leadership, and communicate and enforce those processes.

Maintain baseline expectations among synagogue staff for responsiveness and member relations.

Action What?	Capacity Who? How much? How complex?	Timeframe When?
<p>Define clear processes for volunteers and lay leaders to communicate with professional staff. Provide written guidance to support and reinforce communication norms.</p>	<p>Two steps (no budget required):</p> <p>Year 1: Create (with assistance from the executive director) written guidelines for requests in various categories (i.e., catering, accounting, printing, communications) and define which synagogue staff member to reach out to and what process to expect.</p> <p>Year 3: Once the defined board/committee structure has been implemented, we can take the additional step of implementing better control over which volunteers make requests from the staff and coordinating the staff needs appropriately across the organization.</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 3</p>
<p>Set expectations for staff when working with volunteers, reinforcing that staff serve as the face of the organization and that volunteers are giving their time to support the institution. Expectation setting will also empower staff to say “no” when necessary.</p>	<p>Requires both lay leadership and the Rabbis to deliver the message, and could go to the Personnel Committee to refine.</p> <p>This is not dependent on establishing the correct processes for staff communication but it is part of it - the lay leadership must commit to better interface with the staff while asking for a commitment to a culture that represents the synagogue with the warmth we want to present.</p> <p>Could be included as an augment to the existing staff handbook, and responsibility to implement would fall on the Executive Director and Personnel Committee. This does not require a budget.</p>	<p>Year 1</p>

Additional Strategic Plan Guidance

Exemplar Board Structure

Executive Summary

It is clear to many current synagogue leaders that our present structure is unworkable and will not sustain the congregation long term. This Task Force looked at examples of Executive Committee and Board of Trustees structures at various other synagogues. After much discussion, the Task Force has developed an exemplar board structure customized to Beth Shalom's unique culture and needs. This structure includes a reimagining of the many standing committees, including bringing them under the umbrella of vice presidents, as well as reducing the overall size of the Board of Trustees. The new structure also makes clear the responsibilities and expectations of Board of Trustee members, including:

1. Attendance: expectations and rules for attending board meetings.
2. Virtual Attendance/Quorum: allow for virtual attendance and quorum number.
3. Committee Membership: set clear guidelines and expectations for Board Members' committee participation.
4. Transparency: facilitate greater general membership participation in board communication and decision-making.
5. Feedback and Suggestions: set up mechanisms to facilitate membership feedback and suggestions on board agenda.

The exemplar board structure laid out here calls for a leaner, but more effective structure that has built-in accountability and the necessary lay-leadership support for the president and the synagogue's professional staff.

We developed this exemplar to help guide the strategic planning steering committee and incoming Executive Committee, though we anticipate the suggested here will be further refined and finalized by these committees in the months to come (see implementation schedule above). Some of these decisions will include the exact nature and role of an advisory emeritus committee, honorary trustees being appointed by the Board of Trustees, an update of the bylaws to accommodate these changes, clear definition of the new vice president roles and their committees, and identifying clear communication paths with professional staff for membership, lay leadership and volunteers.

Once decisions are made, some components can be implemented immediately, while others will take from 1-2 years. By staying on an extra year, Debby Firestone is ensuring that this vital change will get underway under the guidance of an experienced president and be ready for the next synagogue president to complete.

Proposed Structure and Roles

We envision a Board of Trustees where the Executive Committee and Board are folded into a single working structure with different levels of responsibility that provides significantly greater support for the President. The new Board would include approximately 18-25 voting members nominated and elected by the synagogue membership for two-year, renewable terms. Roles would include executive officers, vice presidents responsible for coordinating across broad areas of synagogue operations, voting members, and emeritus positions. All voting members would be expected to take on specific committee responsibilities as well, such as chairing or co-chairing at least one standing committee. Officers overseeing multiple standing committees would not be expected to regularly attend committee meetings; rather, they would coordinate with the designated Board liaison as appropriate.

Elected or Appointed?	Proposed Structure	Level and Roles	Count	Vote	Comments
Elected	Executive Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● President ● Executive Vice President ● Secretary ● Treasurer 	4	yes	Do not need to call this the executive level (this is simply to show their function level)
Elected	Vice Presidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finance and Operations ● Fund Development ● Communications and Member Engagement ● Synagogue Life (Derekh) ● Youth 	5	yes	Have umbrella responsibility for a number of committees
Elected	Members		9-12	yes	
Appointed	Immediate Past President		1	yes	
Appointed	President's Appointee		1	no	Advises President and executive

Elected by Board or Appointed	Honorary Emeritus Trustee		2	no	Advises President and executive
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Description of Roles

Role	Staff Leadership Liaison(s)	Expectations	Assigned Committees (based on current structure)
President	Executive Director Rabbi	The president partners with the Synagogue's leadership to promote the Synagogue. The president reviews reports and records, and directs lay leadership in their roles. President oversees personnel and appoints the personnel committee for senior professional staff evaluations.	Personnel
Executive Vice President	Executive Director Rabbi	Assists President; is in position to become the next President.	
Secretary	Executive Director	The secretary plays a critical role in fostering communication and diligence through proper management and utilization of important records such as meeting minutes and the organization's bylaws. Also supports Vice President of Member Engagement to oversee synagogue communications.	Bylaws
Treasurer	Controller	The Board entrusts the Treasurer to manage the synagogue funds. The Treasurer sits on the Finance committee.	Ad hoc audit

Vice President of Finance and Operations	Executive Director Cemetery Director Events Coordinator	Chairs the Finance Committee. This vice president also shall have oversight over security planning subcommittee, and any other duties as the Board sees fit.	Finance Cemetery House Catering Ad hoc security
Vice President of Fund Development	Executive Director Rabbi	Oversees the Fund Development Committee, including Synagogue fundraisers, long-term/planned giving, benefactor development, and any other duties as the Board sees fit. Also includes legacy and new fundraising initiatives, as well as future strategic planning efforts.	Fundraising Ad hoc initiatives (e.g., solar initiative) Ad hoc strategic planning
Vice President of Member Engagement and Communications	Executive Director Communications and Design Manager Director of Derekh & Youth Tefillah	Oversees member engagement and volunteer coordination, which includes the pipeline for future lay leadership. Also oversees external and internal communications, including print materials, the website and social media, with support from the Secretary.	Membership Volunteer coordination <i>Communications</i>
Vice President for Synagogue Life	Rabbi Director of Derekh & Youth Tefillah	Oversees a range of synagogue activities focused on adult members, and any other duties as the Board sees fit. Includes adult education/programming, as well as Derekh initiatives.	Religious Services Adult Education Sisterhood Men's Club Bikur Cholim <i>Social Action</i>
Vice President for Youth (Dor L'Dor)	Director of Youth Programming Director of Derekh & Youth Tefillah JJEP Director	Oversees the Preschool, JJEP, youth organizations, youth tefillah, and youth education programming in conjunction with the Rabbi, and perform any other duties	Youth Commission Early Childhood JJEP

		as the Board sees fit.	
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Board Member Expectations

Expectations	Description
Attendance	The office of any trustee who is absent without adequate excuse from three successive or five meetings of the Board during the year may be declared vacant by the Board.
Virtual Attendance/Quorum	Ten members of the Board of Trustees, either in person or through electronic communication such as Skype or Facetime, shall constitute a quorum.
Committee Membership	Board Members are expected to chair or co-chair at least one standing or ad-hoc committee.
Terms	Board Members and officers cannot be elected for more than three consecutive two-year terms.
Transparency	Board meetings are open to all congregants as observers. Synagogue members are given access to the minutes of the Board meetings. Board meeting minutes are archived in the "files" section of the synagogue website.
Feedback and Suggestions	Synagogue members may submit comments/feedback about the synagogue via a website submission form. These comments and feedback can be addressed at Board meeting as part of ongoing issues and topics. The Board will also hold two to four meetings a year in which congregants can address the board. In addition, each vice president will serve as a key day-to-day point of contact for congregants about their respective areas of responsibility.

Meeting Timing and Frequency

Meeting	Frequency	Notes
Board Meetings	Monthly (except for summer)	
Open Congregational Meetings	Annual or bi-annual	Includes voting meetings as well as opportunity for congregants to provide in-person feedback to the Board of Trustees

Exemplar Volunteer Guidance Document: Shababababa Committee

Shababababa Committee

Revised March 2018

Statement of Purpose and Job Description

The following committee charter summarizes the purpose, expectations, and responsibilities of the Shababababa Committee.

Purpose:

The purpose of the Shababababa Committee is to support the monthly Shababababa & Shabbat Chaverim event.

Shababababa Objectives: Provide a joyous Jewish experience for families with children age 0-5 to which attendees will want to return. Build community by fostering regular attendance and welcoming new families to the event.

Shabbat Chaverim Objectives: Same as Shababababa, but for families with children age 5-10, with the understanding that providing a joyful experience for children in this age group (while maintaining the connection to Kabbalat Shabbat) is a continuous challenge.

The Committee will meet 2-3 times per year (but communicate regularly by email) and will be responsible for:

1. Budget
2. Program Success & Growth
3. Program Logistics

4. Marketing

Nuts and Bolts:

1. Budget

- Annually revisit Shababababa budget/expenses
- Elicit sponsorships from Shababababa attendees for wine and babysitting

2. Program Success & Growth

- Invite all new Jewish ELC families (or other new Jewish families in the community) to attend 1 Shababababa/Shabbat Chaverim for free
- Occasional tie-in programming for grandparents / ELC families
- Ensure new families are welcomed while at the event, encourage mingling
- Elicit ongoing feedback from participants

3. Program Logistics

- Annually: set plan for event online sign ups (online forms managed by staff)
- Annually set catering plan and provide POC for synagogue catering staff
- Monthly: hire, train and pay babysitters
- Monthly: supervise end-of-event clean up
- As needed: review sign up, services, materials, name tags, catering, babysitting, room set up, room clean up and other logistics
- Act as a go-between for attendees who need help with late sign ups, etc.
- Annually: review this document and update as needed

4. Marketing

- Monthly – share and encourage sign up to event (staff is supposed to post the links and place posters in the ELC but need reminders)

Shababababa Committee - Member Expectations:

All Shababababa Committee members should be ambassadors for the event, inviting new families to join, welcoming new families and connecting them with other families when they arrive. All committee members are expected to try to attend committee meetings (2-3 per year); take responsibility for at least one of the monthly tasks, and attend Shababababa at least 6x per year.