

November 16, 2009

Dear JCA Community,

The purpose of this letter is to keep you up to date about efforts to hire a new rabbi. The board conceived of a plan that would involve four separate committees to undertake this task and which would draw on the wide enthusiasm generated at times of transition as we seek bring a new rabbi to Amherst. What follows are short descriptions of each committee's tasks and the names of those serving on each committee. We have around 40 people working on this effort! Co-chairs of each subcommittee plus Lisa Perl binder (JCA co-president) and Guy Wood (First vice-president) make up a Coordinating Committee.

We hope to clarify the roles and purposes of each committee and move ahead with our exciting efforts to find a new rabbi for the JCA with a time line that would allow us to have a rabbi in place by August 1st.

The four committees are:

1. The Host Committee- will work with the Community Engagement Committee to help organize, coordinate and publicize events related to rabbi candidate visits and will coordinate and schedule these visits to insure that all the various stakeholders have ample time to interact with rabbinic candidates.
2. The Community Engagement Committee will continue to obtain input from community members throughout the hiring process. With the Screening Committee, the Community Engagement Committee will also work to keep the community informed about developments and events related to this effort.
3. The Big Questions Committee has two jobs. Firstly they will help by generating questions for the Screening Committee to use in the interview process. A second part of their work will be to ask bigger questions about the JCA. Their efforts in latter regard may well reflect on and inform the rabbi search process and may also continue on after our new rabbi arrives.
4. The Screening Committee is made up of 12 people who represent many of the various demographics at the JCA: those with young children, seniors, gay members, single people, those who feel more connected to the JCA for political and social, as opposed to religious regions, interfaith families. Some on the committee have children at the religious school, some are well versed in Judaism and those less so—in other words, we aimed to create a committee that would truly reflect the diversity of the JCA. Although no committee can represent every single person, we are consciously thinking widely about our charge and remain open and cognizant to the fact that there are many needs of different individuals and groups within the JCA.

The Screening Committee has posted the job description and will do initial phone interviews as a basic screening for candidates and then conduct in-person interviews with candidates that seem especially right for our community. Along with the Community Engagement Committee, it will be responsible for communicating with the membership throughout the rabbi search and hiring process with updates and important information. The Screening Committee's charge is to find a single rabbi for the JCA to begin work August 1, 2010.

Then in-person interviews will be done in conjunction with the Coordinating Committee and will also include a number of other people such as Jody Rosenbloom (Director of Lifelong Learning) & Rachel Goren (Director of Teen Programming). When our selection is down to 3-4 individuals, we will bring each candidate separately to the community, likely over a long weekend, to lead services, do some teaching, interface with the children and teens and meet with members of the community for less structured events.

At this point in time, based on our affiliation with the Reconstructionist Movement, we can post this job through their listing service. If our search does not yield an excellent match that we are thrilled about, we are then invited to cross-post this job through other Jewish affiliations and to those rabbis who are unaffiliated.

We have heard that a number of people are interested in this position. People are drawn to the Valley for sure, but also to our vibrant, intelligent, creative, and diverse population. We accept our charge to bring in an inspired, visionary leader who will help reinvigorate our JCA; we are thrilled to be at this moment of transition that holds such tremendous promise.

Immediately following the Annual Meeting on December 6th there will be time to share your thoughts, desires and questions about our next rabbi. Please join us from 11-12:15 for this important meeting. At any time, if you have thoughts, interests or concerns about the rabbi search, please feel free to contact any of us listed below or send us an email at our dedicated email address: **JCARabbisearch@yahoo.com** And of course, you will be given ample notice about the different events to attend so that we might receive your input, feelings, thoughts and impressions when the rabbi candidates come to visit/interview at the JCA. There will be a methodology in place to receive and process that

essential feedback. Once we have that information, the Screening Committee will make a recommendation to the Board.

We have much to be proud of and to cherish here at the JCA and our next rabbi will need to both reflect that and continue to inspire our growth and our feelings of belonging, connection and doing the broad work of this community. Thank you for your support in this effort.

Sincerely,

Amy Rothenberg (Rabbi Screening Committee) & Janis Wolkenbreit (Community Engagement Committee)