

Dear friends of Hillcrest Jewish Center,

On January 8th, a congregational meeting took place to discuss the financial situation of our congregation, and specifically the possibility of selling the HJC building and leasing it back for a definite period of time.

This was the first meeting I attended on the subject and I was very impressed by the way it was run. Our president, Matt Resnick, coordinated the meeting, explained everything that needed to be explained, and gave ample time to everyone who had something to say, to say it.

The atmosphere of the meeting was somber. The large number of HJC members who attended the meeting, both in person and virtually, wished this was a meeting they didn't need to attend, and yet, they understood their presence was important and they responded "Here I am!" The demographics of our neighborhood are not favorable to the growth of non-orthodox congregations in eastern Queens. As it is shared knowledge, and as it was mentioned repeatedly throughout the meeting, the numbers of the Hillcrest Jewish Center of 2023 are very different from the ones in 1953, 1963 or even 2003. Nobody is to blame for these tectonic shifts that are happening all over central and eastern Queens, as well as in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, and many other places throughout the United States. Longing for the good old times that won't come back not only won't help us, but will make us lose sight of the task at hand.

As I write this message, I don't know the result of the survey that was sent out, but I get a feeling the majority of the congregation, as was the case with the overwhelming majority of the HJC past-presidents, will stand behind the leadership of our congregation in giving a try to what looks like the best option, or, as it was stated, the option that leaves us with more options.

I had the privilege to be the last speaker at the meeting. I must confess that I waited till the end because I wanted to listen to what everybody had to say, and especially because I wanted to make sure that the meeting ended with a positive note.

Being part of a meeting in which the selling of the congregational building is being discussed, could make us lose sight of the fact that our beloved Hillcrest Jewish Center is a vibrant congregation, with a robust daily minyan that meets twice a day, seven days a week, with many classes taught by the rabbi and by knowledgeable members, with social gatherings, cultural activities, and small groups, with an active Sisterhood and Men's Club, with youth services and chesed projects, and with hard-working and dedicated volunteers, staff members and custodians.

It is easy to look at the half empty glass, but I am challenging you to look at the glass half full.

Our shul has been in existence for 83 years, since 1939. Hopefully, with the steps our leadership is planning to take to ensure the financial stability and future, it will be here for all of us for many more years to come.

I hope all of you will make each day in the future of Hillcrest Jewish Center count, and take advantage of all the good things our shul has to offer.

Looking forward to seeing you soon!

Many blessings

Rabbi Manes Kogan