

Presidential Matters

by Marjorie Goldstein



On October 31, 2018 Congregation L'Dor V'Dor held its first Security and Safety meeting as a result of the shooting massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. Approximately 13 congregants expressed interest in working together to find ways of securing our building physically as well as being prepared emotionally by having an evacuation plan in the event of an emergency, i.e, medical, fire, disturbances, and active shooter events.

We initially received guidance and direction from JCRC (Jewish Community Relations Council of New York), enabling us to receive a grant through UJA which paid for a thorough Security Assessment of our building, internally and externally, recommending increased security cameras, improved exterior lighting, doors and glass panels and windows that will protect against forced entry attacks, closely looking at entrances and exits throughout the building, an improved alarm system with panic buttons on the bimah and improved communication devices between the custodians.

Audi Acevedo, Managing Director of our Synagogue, has been working tirelessly to complete the pre-qualifying application for a grant from Homeland Security. If approved, we will move onto the next step of applying for the Homeland Security Grant and hopefully receive funds to make the necessary security updates needed to make our building more secure. This is obviously a very expensive proposition.

As a result of our 2nd Security and Safety meeting, with permission from the Board of Directors, we hired a plain clothed armed police officer from the 111th precinct to stand at the front door on Saturday mornings and for any service or function where a large group of congregants are attending. Our custodians who know the congregants also stand with the officer to greet the congregants.

What has desperately been needed all these months is a Communications Plan where we will be able to effectively communicate with each other during an emergency. We will need to learn how to keep the congregation in the loop during evacuations and reunifications. Who will be the leaders to direct us? What doors should we exit from? Where do we hide? What happens if a person is using a walker and is not as mobile?

As a result of attending the USCJ security conference, I had the privilege and pleasure of meeting Police Officer, Steven Krukowski, involved with Homeland Security who will speak with the Security and Safety Committee on April 30, 2019 at 7:00 pm in our Synagogue. He is a dynamic speaker, an expert in the field who can certainly guide us in formulating a plan. I met with him on Tuesday, April 23rd, walked with him around the interior and exterior of the building and he assured me that he will assist us in having a comprehensive plan of evacuation. He also felt that a lot of security improvements that were initiated years ago, puts us in very good standing. I was certainly relieved to hear this.

We currently have 23 people attending this meeting. If you attend services regularly on Friday evening or Saturday morning and wish to become a leader or want to learn more about how to feel more secure in handling an emergency in our Synagogue while attending services, please consider getting involved in the Security and Safety Committee.

Please contact me at marjorie.goldstein1@gmail.com and let me know if you are interested in attending this very important meeting.

Obviously we still have a lot to get done and we are a work in progress. Hoping that we can all work together in this next important step of learning how to respond in an emergency in an orderly fashion. Most important is our safety as we come to Synagogue.