

Security Improvements at Ahavas Torah

Shortly after the tragic shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, members of Ahavas Torah decided that we need to improve the security arrangements at our shul. We organized a Safety Committee, and the committee met with officers from the Eugene Police Department and representatives from fire safety and security companies. The Eugene Police Department provided us with a thorough security assessment report, and the committee spent considerable time and effort investigating what needs to be done and weighing different options.

The current arrangement is unsatisfactory. There is effectively only one entrance/exit at the front of the sanctuary, and a low window, also in the front. We need to install a second entrance and create a safe space. The committee recommended the following specific changes:

- 1) Install a new metal entry door at the southwest corner of the sanctuary.
- 2) Remove the low window in the sanctuary and close up the wall.
- 3) Replace the existing sanctuary entry door with a metal door with a push-bar allowing exit only.
- 4) Install a narrow observation window in the northwest corner of the sanctuary.
- 5) Remove the exterior door to the small bathroom.
- 6) Replace the door between the kitchen and laundry room with a metal door.
- 7) Install a new gate between the shed and house.

The entry door at the back of the sanctuary will be provided with a narrow vertical door light for observation, a mechanical keypad push button lock, and dead bolt. We hope that these changes will enhance security at the shul, but, of course, nothing is 100% foolproof. Congregants will enter the shul from the rear of the sanctuary and will be required to know the keypad code in order to enter the shul. Whenever we have services, a volunteer will monitor the entryway. Although in the past we have had a completely open-door policy, regrettably, this is no longer possible. Jewish institutions all over the country have updated their security arrangements and are controlling access.

At our last Board meeting the recommendations of the Safety Committee were approved, including spending \$12,000 of our 2019 budget for the security improvements described above. We have signed an agreement with David Zarzycki, a general contractor, to do the work. We are making every effort to keep the costs as low as possible. Our yearly income from donations and membership dues usually matches our ordinary expenditures, so it is essential that our members and friends make an extra contribution this spring to help pay for the security improvements. We have raised \$8,605 so far, including a generous grant (\$1,000) from the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation. Tax-deductible donations should be made payable to "Ahavas Torah" and designated "for security." Please donate, and contact us if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Baruch HaLevi, Safety Committee Chair

George Tanner, Secretary