

Meeting summary for Executive Committee Meeting, Tue. Aug. 27, 2024 (08/27/2024)

Quick recap

The Executive Committee discussed the strategic plan for the upcoming year, focusing on infrastructure, membership benefits, and enhancing support for Jewish community professionals. They also welcomed new members and addressed the challenges faced over the past year, including the ongoing Milchamah. Lastly, they proposed new approaches to make future meetings more interactive and focused on building a supportive community within the RCA.

Summary

President's Remarks

Zvi Engel addressed the first meeting of the new committee, highlighting the unique challenges faced by those serving in the Israeli Defense Forces. He emphasized the importance of maintaining perspective and drawing strength from Jewish history, sharing his personal experiences and conversations with others. He also stressed the need to convey these messages to the community, whether through teaching, chaplaincy, or other means.

Organization's First Meeting of the Year

Zvi and Menachem Penner convened the first meeting of the new year for the organization, welcoming new members and discussing upcoming events. Menachem thanked the attendees and outlined his vision for the meetings, emphasizing the importance of making them substantive and productive. He also introduced the new members of the Executive Committee and expressed his hope to meet with them in the coming weeks.

New Members Discussion

The meeting then moved on to the approval of new memberships, with Brahm Weinberg presenting three recommended candidates: Rabbi Yisrael Gottlieb, Rabbi Shua Katz, and Rabbi Gil Tivon. All three were found to be suitable candidates with the potential to positively contribute to the organization. Menachem then announced a new requirement for membership, which includes paying a membership fee for the first year.

Organization Challenges, Rabbi Changes, and Empowerment

Zvi discussed the challenges the organization faced over the past year, particularly the ongoing Milchamah, and emphasized the need for sustained efforts and support. He announced Rabbi Dratch's departure and the subsequent hiring of Rabbi Penner as his replacement. Rabbi Penner was noted for his engagement with members and work on a strategic plan for the organization. Menachem, the new executive vice president, expressed his excitement about working with the officers and highlighted the importance of empowering rabbis to better serve their communities. He also mentioned the RCA's hope to organize another mission in November.

Strategic Plan for RCA's Upcoming Year 5785

Menachem presented a strategic plan for the upcoming year 5785 to the Executive Committee, which had been developed with input from over 100 people and 11 focus groups. The plan focused on two main areas: infrastructure and membership benefits. The infrastructure aspect included a review of dues procedures and a potential revision of the website, logo, and email. The membership benefits aspect aimed to expand the advantages of being part of the RCA, with a focus on creating tangible benefits for members. Menachem emphasized that the RCA would be seeking assistance from the Executive Committee in various projects, but he also stressed that the average RCA member should not be expected to ask what they can do for the RCA, as they are already heavily involved in their avodat hakodesh. Instead, the RCA should be helping them in their service of Klal Yisrael.

Enhancing Support for Jewish Community Professionals

Menachem discussed plans to enhance support for Jewish community professionals, focusing on five key areas: rabbinic resources, personal support, and professional development, chavruschaft and uplifting the rabbinate. He highlighted the addition of Rabbi Maury Rosenfeld to the team to expand rabbinic resources and the introduction of editable guides for rabbis. Menachem also mentioned plans for personal support, including the possible establishment of WhatsApp groups for communication. He emphasized the importance of professional development and announced a negotiators initiative for better contract deals for rabbis. Lastly, he addressed the issue of child safety protocols for synagogues.

RCA Staff Introduction and Name Update

Menachem introduced the professional staff of the RCA, including new additions and long-time members. He also mentioned the need to update the organization's name to reflect its global reach, a point that was raised by Rabbi Kramer. Menachem agreed with the suggestion but noted that it would require careful consideration and discussion with the board. The team also discussed the need to send out a full list of staff members to all members.

Enhancing RCA Community Engagement Strategy

Menachem proposed a new approach to make future meetings more interactive and focused on building a supportive community within the RCA. He suggested using Zoom Rooms for smaller group discussions and assigning each Committee member to oversee a group of about 15 RCA members, using WhatsApp for communication. The aim was to create a more connected and supportive community, with members belonging to more than one group to ensure a broader network of support. Concerns were raised about members' busy schedules, and the need for a more organic structure and regular check-ins was suggested.