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February 4, 2008

Honorable Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chairperson
New York City Board of Standards and Appeals
40 Rector Street
New York, NY 10007

re: Congregation Shearith Israel
6-10 West 70th Street
New York, New York

74-07-BZ

To the Honorable Meenakshi Srinivasan,

On behalf of the Congregation Shearith Israel, we would like to respond to the points made by architect Craig Morrison, AIA, in his letter dated January 28, 2008. Mr. Morrison states that he has reviewed the drawings submitted to the Board of Standards and Appeals in connection with the zoning variance request for Congregation Shearith Israel. His statements seem to suggest that the synagogue confine its vision to code minimums, rather than build to suit good and reasonable standards for programmatic needs. Where classrooms and class size should be determined by educational standards for specific subjects and age groups, Mr. Morrison suggests that they be designed only to the minimum allowable sizes. In addressing his arguments, we will review each point below:

Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3

These paragraphs cover the architect's background and the material that has been reviewed. We note that Mr. Morrison's resumé does not indicate any experience in design or planning for educational facilities or religious institutions.

Paragraphs 4 and 5

Access and circulation in the proposed and as-of-right schemes are discussed in these paragraphs. Mr. Morrison correctly points out that both the as-of-right and proposed schemes relieve the now untenable access to the synagogue. Both

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schemes remedy the circulation through the addition of an ADA compliant elevator adjacent to the historic synagogue building. In each scheme, the proposed elevator serves both the historic synagogue and the community facility floors of the proposed building. Unlike the existing non-compliant elevator, the proposed elevator is sized and configured to meet program needs and ADA requirements. Most importantly, it stops on all levels of both the existing synagogue and the community facility floors of the proposed building. Because the current elevator does not stop at the level of the main sanctuary, disabled congregants must now be carried up a flight of stairs to reach the main sanctuary. The proposed elevator is a necessary and required improvement to the synagogue's everyday circumstances and is used in both the proposed and as-of-right schemes.

Paragraph 6

Mr. Morrison is incorrect in saying that the existing elevator could be altered to meet ADA requirements by adding a side door. Neither the elevator cab nor its shaftway meet ADA minimum dimensions. To make the existing elevator compliant would require an enlarged cab and a hoistway expansion with significant structural alterations.

Paragraphs 7 and 8

Mr. Morrison says that the programmatic needs of the congregation can be met "comfortably" [my underlining] within the as-of-right envelope, if the residential program is eliminated. However, the as-of-right envelope is inefficient and would severely compromise the current programmatic needs. The rear yard setback variance, which if granted, will add 10' along the south side of floors 2, 3, and 4, enables these floors to have adequately sized classrooms both north and south of the building core. Without this additional area, the spaces south of the core would be cramped, awkward and badly shaped for classroom use.

The loss of 9 adequately sized classrooms, on floors 2, 3, and 4, in a building that provides a total of 15 is significant. Using the 5th and 6th floors for educational purposes would only generate 5 additional classrooms of inefficient proportions. To illustrate the point, the floors 2, 3, and 4 of the proposed plan provides 59% efficiency, still slightly below 60%, the commonly accepted efficiency ratio for this type of educational facility. On the other hand, the as-of-right plan for these floors produces 53% efficiency, a yield that would make doubtful the great expense and disruption of the effort.

Paragraph 9

Mr. Morrison examines the synagogue's historic building and suggests that the Parsonage and Levy Auditorium be used for program needs unfulfilled by the as-of-right envelope. The Levy Auditorium, which Mr. Morrison defines as "the substantial space under the Sanctuary," is already in use for life cycle events year round and is used for summer services as well.

The Parsonage floor plate is inadequate for educational use. Its 1,610 square feet of space remaining after constructing the two required sets of egress stairs and

corridors would be grossly inefficient. Moreover, it is isolated from the rest of the community facility space and its floor levels do not align with other existing floors. Additional floors would block the historic leaded glass windows that provide southern light to the main sanctuary. In any case, its designation as a contributing building for landmarks would make these additional floors unlikely.

Paragraphs 10

Mr. Morrison addresses the specifics of the synagogue's educational program and the motives of their mission. The Toddler Program is intended to serve the congregation and the community. For the synagogue, extending this program to the community is both an important service and an opportunity to foster membership. Mr. Morrison points out that the Toddler Programs, Hebrew School and Adult Education are non-simultaneous and suggests that they share spaces. While this is occasionally the case, the more important factor is that these spaces need to be designed, arranged and furnished with properly sized equipment to accommodate specific age groups and uses.

Paragraph 11

Mr. Morrison correctly details the manner in which the design has evolved over the past five years. The plan has developed and was changed to leave the small synagogue intact because of its significant historic character.

Paragraph 12

For his analysis of the proposed classroom space, Mr. Morrison chooses only code mandated minimums, regulations created to protect the public against worst case situations. He evaluates the plan at 20 square feet per student. He doesn't take into account the stricter requirements set out by the Board of Health for toddler classrooms of 35 square feet per student. In our professional experience, 35 to 40 feet per student is the acceptable figure for educational purposes. CSI's programming has every good reason to seek optimal classrooms.

Paragraph 13

Similarly, Mr. Morrison reviews code mandated minimums for number of toilets, and suggests that the plans show too many. In our professional opinion, the code minimum is meager and inappropriate. He says that by having fewer toilets, one could add to the available educational space. We believe the number of toilets shown is the reasonable number needed to have separate toilets for faculty and for boys and girls. In any case, the interior, windowless space that is used for toilets would be extremely difficult to redistribute from the core and is less than ideal for classrooms.

Paragraph 14

Mr. Morrison maintains that the custodian apartment is "extravagantly sized." This apartment is a small two bedroom apartment, sized for a small family. Furthermore, it is in keeping with the accommodations currently set aside for the superintendent. Mr. Morrison's suggestion that the six bedroom Parsonage be used instead is an even more extravagant solution. And, uses for the Parsonage other than residential would require two means of egress and ADA compliance which would seem to make this

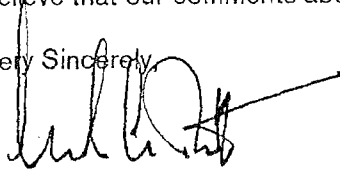
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almost, if not, impossible.

Paragraph 15

In our professional opinion, we respectfully disagree with Mr. Morrison's summary and believe that our comments above demonstrate the inadequacy of his analysis.

Very Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles A. Platt', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Charles A. Platt, FAIA