



December 23, 2019

**An Open Letter to the Jewish Residents of Vantage Point, the Congregation of Bet Aviv,  
and the Howard County Jewish Community**

We are jointly issuing this letter to clear up misunderstandings surrounding the cessation of regular Shabbat services at Vantage Point. Left unaddressed, these misunderstandings may harm the reputations of the Jewish Federation of Howard County (JFHC), Bet Aviv, and Rabbi Amy Scheinerman, as well as the broader Jewish community, while providing no remedy for the Jewish residents of Vantage Point (VP).

Getting straight to the heart of the matter, there was a misunderstanding that Bet Aviv sought the cessation of services at Vantage Point by withholding or redirecting funds away from support for Shabbat services at VP led by Rabbi Scheinerman, in an effort to recruit Jewish residents as members of Bet Aviv. This is not the case. In fact, Bet Aviv has never taken a position, official or unofficial, regarding the Shabbat services at Vantage Point. Bet Aviv has several members in residence there who benefit from Rabbi Scheinerman's services because coming to Oakland Mills for Shabbat presents challenges for them. Denying services to Jews in the hope of gaining members is antithetical to Bet Aviv's fundamental beliefs.

The Federation, as part of its overall annual fundraising campaign, receives designated gifts from certain donors to support both its Jewish Community Chaplain, Rabbi Hillel Baron, and its Community Hospice Rabbi, Amy Scheinerman. While in prior years, some donated funds were available to cover the costs of occasional religious services at Vantage Point; those funds are no longer available. Instead – for this fiscal year, beginning last July – JFHC has received funding that specifically limits those donations to cover the costs for its chaplaincy and hospice services only. To make up this shortfall, generous donors at VP have, for this current fiscal year, designated funds to reimburse Rabbi Scheinerman for her services there. The JFHC is happy to serve as a pass-through for these designated charitable donations for services at Vantage House, just as it does for a number of other projects.

Meanwhile, JFHC is looking for ways to restore Shabbat services at Vantage Point; it has asked the Howard County Board of Rabbis to look into this situation and has also encouraged the VP residents to explore options to support religious services, including some self-funding. We hope this letter clears up the misunderstanding. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or suggestions for the JFHC or VP residents to consider.

Shalom,

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