

# Boca temple must raise \$1 million

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BOCA RATON — The B'nai Torah congregation must raise \$1 million in the next two weeks or face dissolution, directors say in a desperate plea for money.

In letters mailed to members Friday, directors say the money is needed for operating expenses and to make payments on a \$4.5 million loan. They are asking members to donate at least \$2,500 per family to save the synagogue.

NCNB National Bank told the leadership last month that the temple was in default on its payments on the new synagogue at 6261 S.W. 18th St., said Ken Lipman, the synagogue attorney and board member.

If the money is not raised, the leadership will "take it as a sign that the congregation doesn't want to participate in the future of the synagogue," Lipman said.

In the letter, four directors, including Lipman, chastised members for refusing to contribute their share of the synagogue's expenses. The synagogue owes about \$4 million to the bank.

"While during our High Holy Days we have a parking lot full of expensive automobiles, and a congregation living in some of the wealthiest communities in the United States, the per capita donations from our congregation are embarrassingly and substantially less than other Jewish and, indeed, Christian congregations receive from far less wealthy members," they wrote.

Synagogue President Jeffrey Deutch said the letter had to be worded strongly to grab congregants' attention. "The burden falls on the membership," he said. "We're sure the members will be there for us."

Fifty congregants who each had guaranteed \$25,000 against the loan met Jan. 21 and contributed an additional \$70,000, freeing an operations account seized by the bank and allowing the synagogue to meet its expenses through February.

For dues, the 15-year-old congregation asks member families for \$750 a year plus \$2,000 over three years to pay for the new building.

The congregation moved from eastern Boca Raton to its new quarters between Military Trail and Powerline Road in September. The building has a chapel, banquet facilities, a Hebrew school, a gift shop, administrative offices, a terrace and a sanctuary made in part from marble that came from a quarry outside Jerusalem.

Board member Sam Lender said the synagogue is elaborate. "We knew we were going to overbuild, but we were building for tomorrow," he said. The leadership anticipated a surge of new members when the community saw the beauty of the new building, he said.