

English Speakers' Focus Group

26 January 2021

Zoom Attendees: Stuart Stanton, Nadine Wruble, Eileen Steinberg, Lois Feinerman, Carol Goldberg, Lida Baker, Judy Ann Cohen, Ann Hilsden, Bernice Fogel, Hendelle Waldman, Shoshana Shinar, David Zwebner, Marianne Hatchwell, Laurie Blendis, Chana Devorah Schwartz, Yisrael Smith, Naomi Tsur,
Staff: Batel Spivack, Mya Goodman

- **Next Meeting: 16 March 2021**
- **Below summary see examples of social media posts, letters to the editor & letters to decision makers**

Meeting Summary:

- 1) Intro & welcome, Carol Goldberg:
 - a) Email jerusalemgreenfund@gmail.com if you have issues that are important to you to be addressed in future meetings. Also, remember to bring friends to the next meeting!
- 2) Summary of the goals of the Jerusalem Sustainable Lobby, Batel Spivack:
 - a) The lobby meets with the Mayor Moshe Leon, every quarter. The lobby, which consists of over 70+ organizations, businesses, and individuals, creates the agenda for these meetings.
 - b) A unique and important aspect of the lobby is our voting process: we must come to a consensus to decide on our courses of action. We are one body, and we have a united message.
 - c) What gives the lobby legitimacy? The power of neighborhoods, businesses, and individuals coming together. We are a force to be reckoned with: the Mayor recognizes that if he listens to us, we are more likely to vote for him. While we take strong stances on environmental issues, we do not write legal documents of objection. A healthy relationship with the municipality is key to the success of our lobby.
 - d) In addition to quarterly meetings with the Mayor, the lobby also meets once every two months with the city engineer, Even Yoel. The agendas for these meetings are set by Even.
- 3) Updates on Reches Lavan status, Naomi Tsur:
 - a) [Dr. Alon Tal](#), one of the leading voices in Israel's environmental movement and now deputy Chair of KKL-JNF, asked Naomi and the Sustainable Jerusalem Lobby for guidance on how to move forward with Reches Lavan.
 - b) The Lobby needs to prove the value of the Jerusalem Hills and its flora and fauna as well as prove that there are better alternative locations for housing buildings/developments.
 - c) Next steps: continue to advocate to protect the Jerusalem Hills (part of JGF's work on creating a Biosphere Reserve in the Jerusalem Hills)

which would protect Reches Lavan), take individual action, and eventually, go to the High Court.

- 4) Additional environmental challenges in Jerusalem; how the Lobby can help, Bernice Fogel and Chana Schwartz:
 - a) Bernice: Two hotels and over 180 parking spaces are being built on Achad Ha'am st. reaching down Keren Hayesod st. and into Sokolov st. The exponential increase in the # vehicles on this neighborhood road is a danger to pedestrians who walk in the street due to narrow sidewalks as well as increased air pollution. The Lobby can help with publicizing the damaging effects of this construction.
 - b) Chana: In Neve Yaakov Mizrach (Kaminetz), there is forested land that is city property but is a crucial area for gazelles and an integral part of the neighborhood. The city wants to chop down 40 m of this forested area for construction. The Lobby can help with figuring out how to meet the needs of the city while also protecting the forest.
- 5) Final remarks from Naomi, Batel, and Lois:
 - a) Review [action steps](#) for Reches Lavan (which can be translated into any of the urban nature sites under threat). Take action in your social networks (ex: writing a letter with members of your gardening group, the English Speakers' Focus Group, your friends, etc)
 - b) Friday 12/2/21 10:00 opens an exhibit of photos of Reches Lavan by a local photographer at the Nature Museum. Visit!
 - c) Become a JGF [Stakeholder](#) and encourage others to join, too!

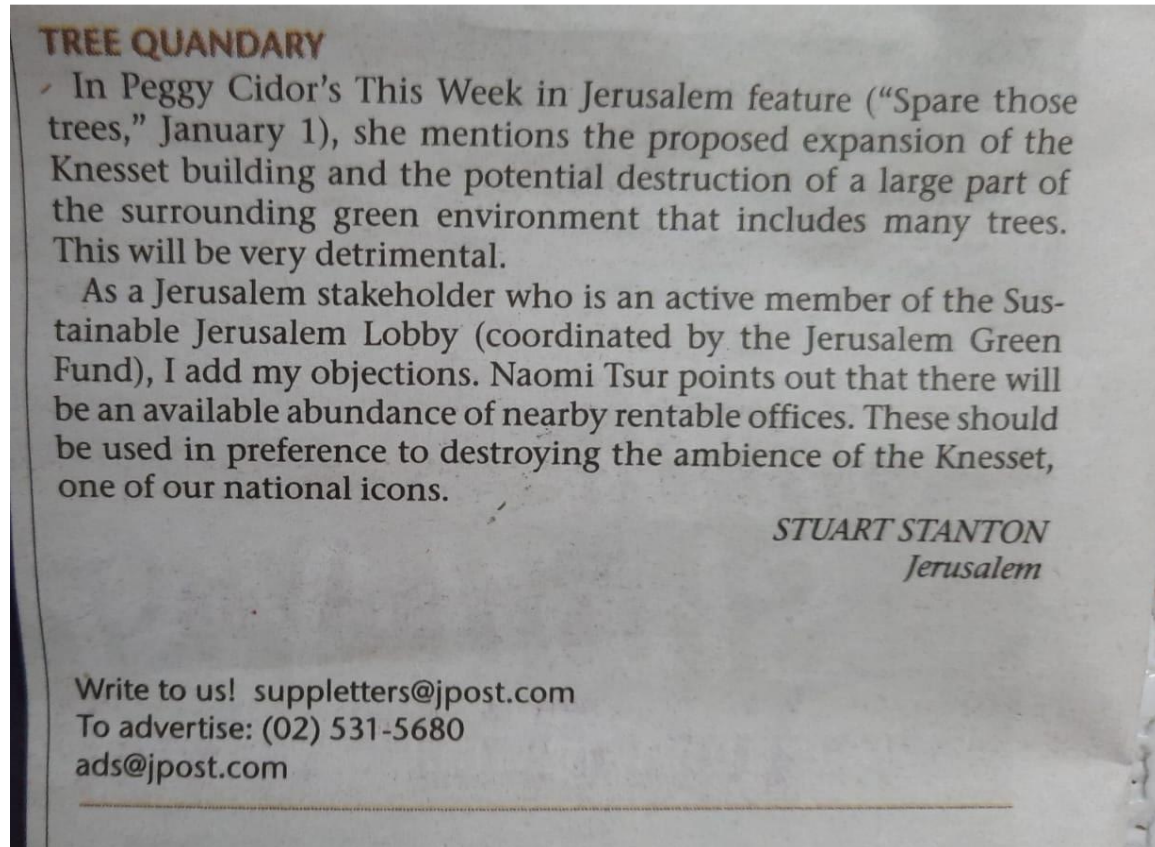
Example of a post for social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram etc.):



This week I took my children to the urban nature sight Mitzpetal, a magical hill in Armon Hanatziv with Turmus flowers in full bloom. Like the Turmus Hill in Emek Haela only closer, more parking and reachable via public transpo. COME. This place is under threat of development as the Israel Police are meant to expand their station and take over the hill. It's been approved by the local building court, but still

may be overturned, if we act. Go, take a selfie, share it on social media, influence & change policy! For more info email jerusalemgreenfund@gmail.com or sign the petition: <http://www.atzuma.co.il/miztpetel>

Example of letter to the Editor, Jpost, by Stuart Stanton:



Example of letter to a Decision maker by Marriane Hatchwell:

Dear

I am writing as an impassioned individual member and stakeholder of the Jerusalem Green Fund, which works for a greener, more beautiful and sustainable Jerusalem and its surroundings. We are a self-funded organisation that lobbies for the protection of nature, amongst other things, in the Jerusalem area.

You must surely be aware that the natural world is gradually being destroyed in most parts of inhabitable earth and that this has been going on relentlessly for many decades now, including in Israel.

You must also be aware that the conditions that people, animals and plants, are gradually deteriorating. Biodiversity is decreasing. We might think of the obvious areas such as the Amazon rain forests but in truth, almost every nation is destroying its ecosystems to some degree.

The Reches Lavan proposed development is one such example of the potential destruction to a large area of semi-arid landscape, its vegetation and wildlife. It must not be allowed to proceed.

It has become even more apparent, during the coronavirus pandemic, that, all over the world, people have begun to reconnect more with nature, with the peace of nature, with the indescribable relief and healing that being in natural landscapes gives to every single individual, unconsciously or consciously. Part of our enjoyment of nature is thanks to the other life forms that we coexist with and that are truly at our mercy. About the largest creature Israelis ever see are the gazelles, living in various areas around the country but whose habitat is often threatened. You cannot deny the sheer sense of delight, relief and exhilaration we, as humans, experience when we catch sight of such beautiful animals. We, as Jews, if nothing else, have an obligation to take care of all God's creatures. Of all nations, leading in so many ways, we must lead also in innovative solutions for greener living, greener for both wildlife and people.

Like many have done so before me, I am writing to protest the approval of the Leches Lavan development. I know for a fact that there are other building possibilities in already developed areas of Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Hills are unique and wonderful. They must be protected.

I know for a fact that the municipality, indeed the whole nation of Israel, has a duty and responsibility to protect natural areas, or areas of outstanding natural beauty, or areas of crucial importance in terms of quality of life for both flora and fauna, human and non-human life.

There have been many many objections to the Reches Lavan project, as you well know, partly for the reasons I have mentioned above.

This project will also create a precedent for further development in natural places all over the country.

Since the plan was drawn up some years ago, many changes have occurred in Jerusalem, in the light of which old planning proposals must be re-evaluated, redesigned or completely scrapped.

We cannot indiscriminately continue to construct on land knowing the damage it causes.

We will have to find more intelligent solutions. This we are well capable of.

You, that are alive now, amongst those with more direct influence on construction, and who are also, or should be, guardians of the land, must shift your understanding, must examine the true cost of building on sacred areas.

We only pass through the earth—we are not its owners, we die leaving something of the times we lived in but also hopefully setting the scene for a better life for our children, and their children and the wonderful animals and plants, that are truly at our mercy.

Given the knowledge, wisdom, common sense, facts, expertise, technological innovations available to us, we cannot exercise our capacity for more destruction nor be driven by greed, to which there is truly no end, rather by our capacity to show our deep respect and duty of care, for the land we erroneously abuse and disregard only too often.

Israeli politicians both national and local, engineers, city designers, constructors, organisations for the protection of nature, must build with vision for the long term. You must set examples of what can be done for the good of all living things. We all have a duty to work together to protect the little natural landscape we have. We actually do not have a choice if we are to maintain some connection with nature, which is vital for us as we know ourselves, and vital for the magnificent and glorious diversity of life on earth.

If you do not have to approve the Reches Lavan development, then please exert your influence to prevent it and to encourage construction on land that is already within the present built up areas.

I hope you take heed. I hope I have inspired you to take another look- to be part of a growing body of people and organisations working for the good of the earth, in Israel and beyond.

Your duty is to serve us and our land, together, and if there is a way to make this possible, which I know there is, then I ask that you do so.

Yours faithfully