

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
The Jewish Center of Princeton
Sunday, May 17, 2015**

Board Meeting Attendees: Moshe Margolin, Jeanette Timmons, Ginger Schnitzer, Susan Kanter, Naomi Perlman, Marc Wisotsky, Melissa Hager, Alexandra Bar-Cohen, Fred Appel, Harry Cummins, Randy Brett, Martha Friedman, Jonathan Gershen, Judi Fleitman, Polly Strauss, Michael Bloom, Nicole Soffin, Joel Reichbart, Evy Grossman, Amy Zacks, Suki Wasserman, Barbara Gantwerk, Jerry Neumann, Naomi Perlman, Gil Gordon

TJC Staff Attendees: Rabbi Feldman, Hazzan Dulkan, and Phil Nordlinger

Meeting called to order at 7:06 pm by President Gil Gordon

The meeting began with a short visual D'var Torah by Hazzan Dulkan.

1. Approval of March Minutes

A motion was made by Randy Brett to accept the minutes. Seconded by Harry Cummins. The motion passed unanimously and the minutes were approved.

2. Review and Discussion of the present fiscal year budget and the projected 2015-16 budget (Joel Reichbart)

- (a) Regarding the current fiscal year's operating budget, a modest surplus is projected due to a combination of lower expenses in some areas and robust fundraising. At present the surplus is \$192k, which is likely to drop before the end of the FY. JR projects ending the FY with a modest surplus of \$75k. The surplus will move into the capital reserve fund; the amount will contribute to emergency repairs. Pressing capital expenses (for repair of pavers and driveways/parking areas) above the amount of the budget surplus will come from the capital reserve fund.
- (b) Turning to the proposed budget for 2015-16, JR went through all categories of operating income and expenses and responded to specific questions. Individual projected income and expense items were broken down in particular cases and queried.
- (c) Among the highlights: the budget projects a modest decline in dues revenue in keeping with the annual membership decline of approx. 3%. Membership dues rates will increase 2.5% across all membership categories. Professional salaries are projected to increase due to turnover in administrative positions, contracted salary increases, and provision for administrative overtime payments. B'nai Mitzvah income and expenses are projected to rise because of increased number of B'nai Mitzvah to 40 in '15-'16.
- (d) The Board moved into executive session briefly to discuss staff salary matters – specifically Rabbi Feldman's contract negotiations, which have taken longer than expected. Unclear contractual language from the previous contract had to be clarified. Negotiations are moving quickly to a positive conclusion.

- (e) At the end of its executive session a motion was made by Suki Wasserman to approve the 2015-16 operating budget. Seconded by Judi Fleitman. The motion was passed unanimously. The 2015-16 budget is thus approved go to the membership for formal approval at the next congregational meeting.

3. Discussion of hiring a consultant (Rabbi Melissa Weintraub's 'Civility' initiative, run in conjunction with the Jewish Council of Public Affairs).

- (a) Rabbi Feldman presented his reasons for wanting to invite Rabbi Weintraub's organization to the shul. (For more information on her organization see: <http://civility.jewishpublicaffairs.org/>) Her intervention would initiate a yearlong dialogue at TJC – involving a discovery period (interviews with multiple congregants) and something called a “bridging” period. The consultant's role, RAF noted, is not to tell the synagogue what to do regarding Israel advocacy issues. It is rather to foster increased respect for opposing viewpoints and respectful dialogue where Israel advocacy is concerned. The intervention would likely begin at TJC in the fall after the High Holidays, but planning for it would begin this summer. Rabbi Feldman and Gil Gordon emphasized that no decision has been made to engage Rabbi Weintraub, and that we still need to receive a specific proposal for her work.
- (b) The consultant's fees – in the range of \$15-20k - are not included in the coming FY's budget. Rabbi Feldman informed the Board that a congregant who wishes to remain anonymous is offering to cover at least part of the consultant's fee (which has yet to be determined). RAF and GG expressed optimism that the final amount would be covered by congregant donations and from Israel Affairs restricted fund.
- (c) Some Board members expressed the view that it is the purview of the Board, and not the Rabbi and the EC, to approve and authorize such an expense and initiative. Gil Gordon expressed his disagreement. He said that the Naomi P. would keep the Board informed of the initiative and that it would be her decision about whether and how to involve the Board in making this decision.
- (d) GG confirmed that at its last meeting the EC tabled the application from several congregants to invite representatives of the Israel advocacy organization J-Street to the synagogue. He would neither speculate on how long this application would remain tabled nor on whether representatives of other Israel advocacy organizations would be invited to TJC during the yearlong Civility initiative being considered.
- (e) Several congregants expressed disagreement with the decision to table the J-Street application. Among those was Board member Moshe Margolin, who read out a prepared statement on this matter and on the conduct of the Executive Committee with respect to Israel advocacy issues over the last two years. His statement is appended to these minutes. Several members of the EC present at the meeting expressed disagreement with MM's characterization of the EC's conduct in this matter.
- (f) Some concern was expressed that Board discomfort with the initiative might hamper its effectiveness at TJC.

4. Presentation of preliminary “top-line” results from Long-Range Planning survey (Moshe Margolin)

- (a) Moshe Margolin provided preliminary analysis of the responses to the Congregant Survey (see attached). The profile of respondents was discussed – demographic and otherwise. Frequency of

congregant attendance at services, Shabbat and High Holiday, were also discussed, as were general attitudes toward programming (Adult Ed, Israel Affairs), dues, and fundraising. Discussion ensued and more data analysis from the Survey requested.

5. Decision on allocation of Board Tzedakah money (Melissa Hager)

- (a) MH made the recommendation that this year's Board tzedakah allocation be divided between JFCS and the Crisis Ministry of Princeton and Trenton.
- (b) Other worthy local charities – both Jewish and non-Jewish - were mentioned as alternatives.
- (c) A motion was made by Judi Fleitman to give MH the authority to allocate the fund as she sees fit. Michael Bloom seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

6. New Business (various)

Thank you was extended to everyone who helped organize the "Divas on the Bimah" fundraising event.

An announcement was made of the next Central NJ American Jewish Congress annual dinner on Wednesday May 27th – to be held at a local Hindu temple.

The last Jewish Center Blood Drive of the year is scheduled for Sunday June 14th.

Gill adjourned meeting at 9:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Fred Appel
Chair, Adult Education