

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
The Jewish Center of Princeton
Thursday, June 18, 2015**

Board Meeting Attendees: Naomi Perlman, Jeannette Timmons, Fred Appel, Ginger Schnitzer, Phil Carchman, Naomi Richman Neumann, Dina Shaw, Jerry Neumann, Alexandra Bar-Cohen, Mike Bloom, Jonathan Gershen, Susan Kanter, Jon Shavel, Heidi Shegoski, Michael Vermut, Dan Brent, Steve Hudis, Nicole Soffin, Rebecca Sarett, Bob Garber, Gil Gordon

TJC Congregants in Attendance: Ruth Schulman, Larry Lieberman and Sherry Rosen

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

1. Welcome (Naomi Perlman)

- (a) Meeting called to order at 7:07 pm by President Naomi Perlman.
- (b) The meeting began with some housekeeping matters, including the distribution of written materials to Board members and Board member self-introductions.

2. Introduction and Board Review/Consent Agendas (Naomi Perlman)

- (a) Naomi P made a short presentation about standards of conduct at Board meetings, including the importance of confidentiality.
- (b) Naomi P presented the concept of Consent Agendas. These will be reports from committee chairs that will be collected by VPs and distributed to Board members by the Recording Secretary in advance of Board meetings – along with the agenda for the forthcoming meeting.
- (c) There was a brief discussion of synagogue attendance and participation expectations of Board members. Board members were urged to volunteer for positions such as Friday evening and/or Saturday morning Shabbat greeters. Regular attendance at Shabbat services and occasional attendance at Wednesday 7 am & Sunday 9 am services was encouraged. Board members were also encouraged to support the Annual Fund and the President's main initiatives this season.

3. President's Report (Naomi Perlman)

- (a) Neil Wise's role at TJC is changing. He is taking over staff oversight of the Annual Fund and fundraising in general, in addition to his programming responsibilities. His new title will be Director of Programming and Development. Neil will be staff contact person for fundraising and will work closely with Fundraising Chair Susan Kantor in this area. A public announcement will be made shortly.
- (b) Naomi P announced that the Richard B. Fishbane Leadership Award Committee has chosen the first recipient of this honor: congregant Mark Merkovitz. Recipients are congregants who have demonstrated leadership in TJC and in the greater community in endeavors that exemplify Jewish values. He will receive the award at a dinner on Friday Sept 18, 2015, an event which will also kick off the Annual Fund campaign. Board members were urged to attend.

- (c) Naomi P then outlined her main initiatives for the coming season: a synagogue-wide initiative focusing on young families; a focus on upgrading the synagogue infrastructure (repairs, interior and exterior); and what she described as community building.
- (d) An update was provided on the status of the initiative planned for this coming season aimed at helping congregants discuss issues of Israel advocacy with mutual respect and civility at TJC. The initiative will involve Rabbi Melissa Weintraub's organization in the shul. (For more information on her organization see: <http://civility.jewishpublicaffairs.org/>) The broad outline of the expected activities of this organization at TJC was discussed. Naomi is expecting a formal plan in place shortly. The organization's engagement with TJC is expected to begin this summer and will involve several in-person visits to the synagogue community by Rabbi Weintraub in the course of the fall.
- (e) Naomi P updated the Board on her recent meeting with the Long Range Planning (LRP) committee. This committee discussed the need for improved communication between the lay leadership and the congregation. Transparency was proposed as an ideal. To this end future Board meeting minutes will be accessible to congregants on TJC website through a password protected portal. Congregant Bob Weber is working on this now. In a similar vein our Finance co-chairs are working to render our financial statements more easily comprehensible (see finance report, below).

4. Administrative Report (Phil Nordlinger in the absence of Polly Strauss)

- (a) Congregational billing has gone out this week; congregants continue to be encouraged to pay dues by check.
- (b) Update on maintenance issues. Phil has received estimates for various sorts of repair work that are pressing and contractors have visited the shul.
 - a. Indoor: wallpaper removal and re-wallpapering of lobby, front hallway, all four bathrooms, and social hall are planned over the summer. We have received bids from various contractors and are awaiting others. Estimates are in the area of \$15k. Bids will be assessed by Polly S and the House Committee.
 - b. Outdoor: pavers and lighting outside the building and around the parking lot are two outdoor maintenance items deemed most important for safety considerations. Contracts are out for bidding. Total cost will be approximately \$75-80 for the paver replacement and installation and \$15k for the lighting. The expectation is that these outdoor items – as well as the interior jobs – will be complete before Rosh Hashana.
 - c. Repaving of the driveway (parking lot) and improving the drainage constitute yet another set of needed outdoor repairs but it has been decided that these repair items will be delayed at least until the late fall and perhaps longer.

5. Clergy Report (Hazzan Dulkan & Rabbi Feldman)

- (a) Hazzan Dulkan reported on plans for innovative Friday evening Shabbat services this summer – many will be outdoors, occasionally organized in conjunction with meals. These are opportunities to meet potential new congregants who are shul shopping; Board members were asked to consider attending.
- (b) Hazzan Dulkan also reported that Torah readings will soon be listed on the TJC website, including audio recordings of the portions and photos of the text as written in the scrolls. This online service will be available in beta version shortly. Hazzan Dulkan thanked those volunteers who helped make this happen.

- (c) Rabbi Feldman reported on the recent gift to TJC of a sefer Torah by the Fath family. It will be officially dedicated on Simchat Torah with Ruth Fath in honor of her late husband Joe Fath.

6. Finance Report (Jonathan Gershen and Jon Shavel)

- (a) The most recent financial report was sent to the shul's bank, TD. The synagogue retains a line of credit with TD.
- (b) The May 2015 financial statement was presented.
- (c) The Finance co-chairs intend to restructure the financial reports to ensure greater transparency and legibility – including for those with no financial background.

7. Young family initiative (Hazzan Dulkan and Ginger Schnitzer)

- (a) The goal of this initiative is to reimagine young family engagement at TJC.
- (b) ECE enrollment has diminished but there remains a demand in this demographic for Jewish content, programming, and connection.
- (c) The initiative will focus on fostering relationships, a sense of Jewish connection, and meaningful Jewish experiences on the terms of these young families - with the aim of fostering the next generation of TJC leaders.
- (d) The plan is to coordinate all the various family programs at TJC under one umbrella. The new approach is holistic/systemic rather than program-based.
- (e) The historical background to this initiative was presented. An inventory has already been made of all existing/past programs and resources pertaining to young families.
- (f) The budget allocated to this initiative in FY 16 is \$5,000.
- (g) There is an effort underway to gather information about the number of congregants with young children. 133 children from 93 families have been identified. The parents will be contacted and engaged in discussion about what sort of programs and activities they'd be interested in. Spearheading this initiative are congregants Sarah Korn and Amy Zacks, who have agreed to serve as co-chairs of a steering committee.
- (h) All Board members and committee chairs were to be encouraged to find ways to engage young families in their portfolios. To this end the Board was split into five break-out groups, each of which brainstormed for a few minutes on this issue. Suggestions will be synthesized and a report on them will be made to the Board in the future

8. New Business

- (a) Discussion ensued about the motion made and passed by the congregation at the Annual Meeting of May 31 2015. The motion was to restart TJC's Israel Advocacy Program by inviting representatives of both AIPAC and J-Street to make separate presentations to The Jewish Center during the 2015-16 year. There was discussion in particular about the meaning of this motion and how it would be implemented.
 - a. It was suggested by some that the aforementioned congregational vote is binding. It was suggested by others on the contrary that the congregational vote was precatory – advisory – rather than binding.
 - b. Regardless of this disagreement as to the meaning of the congregational vote, it was pointed out that this vote called for implementation of the motion sometime during 2015-16 - which could mean later in the season rather than immediately. Thus there is no rush to implement it.

- c. It was further agreed that the congregational vote passed at the Annual Meeting is part of the context in which Rabbi Weintraub and her organization will begin the “Resetting the Table” process at TJC this coming season. The need for this process to go forward immediately was reiterated.

9. Executive Session

- (a) Items discussed in this section concern confidential matters – such as (but not limited to) personnel.

10. Adjournment

- (a) Naomi P. adjourned the meeting at 9:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Fred Appel
Recording Secretary.