

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
The Jewish Center of Princeton
Thursday, September 17, 2015**

Board Meeting Attendees: Naomi Perlman, Jeannette Timmons, Fred Appel, Susan Kanter, Nicole Soffin, Ginger Schnitzer, Phil Carchman, Michael Bloom, Jonathan Gershen, Jon Shavel, Dan Brent, Steve Hudis, Bob Garber, Gil Gordon, Steven Hubert, Stephanie Will, Polly Strauss, Helaine Isaacs, Linda Milstein, Randy Brett, Judi Fleitman, Heidi Shegoski, Audrey Straus

TJC Congregants in Attendance: Sherry Rosen, Rob Goldston

TJC Staff Attendees: Rabbi Feldman, Phil Nordlinger, and Gila Levin

1. Call to Order (Naomi Perlman)

- (a) Meeting called to order at 7:06 pm by President Naomi Perlman.

2. Good & Welfare (Naomi Perlman)

- (a) On behalf of the Board Naomi extended to Linda Grenis the Board's best wishes for a rapid recovery from her recent surgery.
- (b) Naomi read out a few written expressions of appreciation to our clergy from congregants who experienced family tragedy over the summer.

3. Approval of Prior Minutes and consent agendas (Naomi Perlman)

- (a) A motion was made by Jonathan Gershen to approve the minutes of the meeting of August 12, 2015 – and to approve the consent agendas prepared by the Vice-Presidents and distributed to Board members before this meeting. Bob Garber seconded. The minutes and consent agendas were approved.
- (b) Fred will work with congregant Bob Weber in the coming weeks to see that recently approved Board minutes are available to congregants on TJC website.

4. President's Remarks (Naomi Perlman)

- (a) High Holiday updates: Naomi extended her thanks to Judi Fleitman, Linda Milstein, and our staff and all volunteers for their hard work during Rosh Hashanah. She also reported on positive comments from congregants about the recent building renovations.
- (b) Membership update: The clean-up of the membership rolls proceeds. Membership numbers are down – we now have 492 billable families. More complete numbers for the current FY will be available after the High Holidays.
- (c) Audit: A professional audit of our financial books has been recommended by our Finance Committee. TJC has not undergone such an outside audit for years. Various external auditing companies are being interviewed by the Committee; a firm will be chosen by the next Board meeting.

- (d) U League Update: Naomi provided background for new Board members of the on-going negotiations with this secular pre-school program concerning a lease agreement with a start date of September 2016.
- (e) TJC Newsletter: currently the newsletter is published monthly with the exception of the summer. It takes a great deal of staff and volunteer time every month. In addition to the amount of staff time it takes, it is costly (ca \$700 per month; advertising revenue is ca \$100 per month). Possible changes to the newsletter were discussed. Some suggestions: moving to an online format; retaining the hard copy and making it quarterly or bimonthly instead. Discussion ensued.
 - a. It was noted that postage and paper costs could be saved by going to online distribution. However these would be the only savings. Considerable staff time (design/layout, writing, editing, etc) would still be required.
 - b. It was suggested that the hard copy newsletter remains an invaluable means of communication with the congregants. If it were discontinued, many congregants would lose a valuable means of regular contact with the shul – which could not be replaced by mass emails. (It was also pointed out that many congregants are inundated with electronic communication and don't open many Jewish Center emails.)
 - c. Another suggestion was made to ease the burden on TJC staff: to find a university student intern majoring in communication or journalism to shoulder some of the writing, editing and/or layout responsibilities. Others recommended other types of outsourcing of newsletter labor (e.g. soliciting content from the Jewish Theological Seminary, etc).
 - d. Several Board members suggested that ad rates be reexamined and perhaps increased.
 - e. Phil Nordlinger observed that delays in the receipt of content from committees increase the amount of staff time by dragging out production. He suggests that newsletter deadlines be more strictly observed.

5. Administrative Report (Phil Nordlinger)

- (a) Phil noted that it was his first High Holidays at TJC and expressed his appreciation for all the long-standing congregants who helped him during this busy period.

6. VP Religious Affairs Report (Judi Fleitman)

- (a) Judi extended a thank you to Nancy Lewis for her help in distributing HH honors.
- (b) She also extended appreciation to all staff and congregants who made the Riverside service a success, to the Men's Club for coordinating the HH greeters, and to the clergy for their hard and inspiring work.
- (c) Kol Nidre service will have a cello accompaniment, as before. Linda Meisel is the featured speaker at the Yom Kippur forum. 22 congregants have registered for the synagogue break the fast.
- (d) Ruth Fath, Eliot Freeman, and Evy Grossman will be the Simchat Torah honorees.

7. Finance Report (Jonathan Gershen)

- (a) Approx 80% of congregational dues have already been collected for the present FY.
- (b) Collections of ECE and religious school tuition is proceeding.

8. Report on Annual Fund and Fundraising (Naomi Perlman for Neil Wise)

- (a) The Richard Fishbane Shabbat Tribute on Friday September 18, 2015, honoring the inaugural recipient of the new Richard B Fishbane Leadership Award, Mark Merkovitz, currently has 200 registered attendees. A kabbalat shabbat service precedes the dinner at 6:30.
- (b) The annual fund mailing has gone out; Board participation is encouraged. More info. on the Annual Fund will be forthcoming from Neil at the October meeting.

9. Discussion of Early Childhood Education Program (Ginger Schnitzer, Gila Levin)

- (a) Ginger reported on the current state of ECE enrollment and provided a summary of all TJC family programs during the HH and planned for the fall season. She noted that the future of young family engagement at TJC is not wholly bound up with the future of the present ECE preschool program.
- (b) Notwithstanding all efforts, ECE enrollment numbers have not stabilized as hoped. The ECE currently has 15 enrollees, 9 of whom will graduate at the end of 2015-16. The enrollment figures make continuation of the ECE program at TJC difficult. In recent weeks Ginger has spoken to parents of all ECE parents to inform them that the future of TJC ECE after 2015-16 is uncertain – to allow them to make alternative plans. A letter from a current ECE parent was read to the Board.
- (c) Ginger reported on the widespread consultation being conducted by the Education committee with parents of young children. She suggested that young families at TJC want to engage with the shul differently – outside the ECE model. It was noted that ECE programs in Jewish communities across the nation are changing – and the situation in this community is no different.
- (d) She recommended to the Board that The Joan Levin Early Childhood Education program suspend operations of its ECE at the end of 2015-16. She emphasized that her recommendation was for a suspension rather than a closure, as changing circumstances in the future might make it possible for TJC to restart its ECE program.
- (e) Randy Brett made a formal motion to this effect: that TJC suspend operation of the Joan Levin ECE program until a future board determines that circumstances warrant resuming operations. The motion was seconded by Heidi Shegoski and Audrey Straus. Discussion ensued. The motion was passed unanimously.

10. Discussion of October/15 visit to TJC by Rabbi Melissa Weintraub (Phil Carchman & Helaine Isaacs)

- (a) Helaine and Phil made reference to the congregational email that went out the previous day re: the present Israel dialogue initiative. Within 24 hours 25 congregants responded to express a willingness to take part in workshops facilitated by Rabbi Weintraub's organization on October 21st and October 22nd. Attendance at each workshop will be capped at 40 congregants. A small committee composed of Phil, Helaine, Linda Grenis, and Barak Bar Cohen has been established to determine the final composition of the October workshops. The committee will ensure broad representation from all elements of the congregation. Board members who are unable to take part in the evening workshops in October will be invited to meet with Rabbi Weintraub at lunchtime during the day – on both days.

11. Executive Session

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

12. Adjournment

- (a) Naomi P. adjourned the meeting at 9:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Fred Appel
Recording Secretary