



General Board Meeting, September 8, 2019

Present:

Bernard Abramson	Bret Jacknow	Lynn Ross
Gabrielle Bailey	Heidi Joseph	Robert Schwartz
Michelle Bellows	Edye Kamenir	Ed Simon
Randy Brett	Jonathan Katz	Nicole Soffin
Rabbi Adam Feldman	Moshe Margolin	Polly Strauss
Lew Gantwerk	Kim Marks	Harlan Tenenbaum
Andrea Hoberman-	Liz Nayden	Cantor Jeff Warschauer
Martinez	Abigail Rose	Sandy Wilson
Helaine Isaacs	James Rosenberg	

Minutes:

1. Meeting called to order at 5:02 PM
2. **D'var Torah** by Moshe Margolin
3. **Forum on Town Topics advert**
 - 3.1 Randy Brett welcomed congregants to the Board meeting. He introduced the forum by rehearsing the sequence of events this summer which surrounded the House of Representatives resolution HR 264, Representative Watson Coleman's vote against the resolution, TJC Board's stance with the Federation's statement of approval of the resolution, and the advert that appeared in Town Topics on this matter.
 - 3.2 Congregants were invited to speak. The statements and questions included:
 - See statement included as Attachment A
 - The advert is political statement and TJC should not be involved in political matters
 - What was the urgency for the Board to make a statement or respond to the House Resolution?
 - Why would Board members express an opinion on Israel matters when they know there is a diversity of opinion in the congregation?
 - BDS is about taking away our right to choose where we want to live, Jews should be allowed to love anywhere they wish.
 - The Board is to be commended for speaking out with all the other members of the community.
 - How can we avoid this in future?
 - Most important is to keep shalom bayit and we should not do anything to jeopardize.
 - How do we ensure there is a Board discussion at an earlier stage of the process?
 - This type of issue needed congregational involvement. There should be changes to the by-laws to ensure this.

- The atrocities committed by the government of Israel prohibit supporting this resolution. The congregation is being hijacked by special interests.
- How can we best support the state of Israel?
- Given the recent history of disagreements at the Jewish Center this letter was a knowingly destructive act.
- Why wasn't there a congregational meeting?
- This is not about the Israeli government or the letter, it is about taking a stand against BDS.
- As a Jewish congregation we should take a stand against BDS. I tell my kids to stand up for themselves yet we are suggesting that the congregation should not stand up for itself.
- Shouldn't we have a TJC position on BDS?
- The Jewish Center should not take a stand on BDS.
- Should a religious institution be endorsing political positions? AIPAC and J-Street endorsed this resolution and I agree with them in fighting BDS. We open the door to inter-religious political conflict this way.
- By-laws should be amended to require written notice to congregation before Board votes on controversial issues as a way to protect leaders and encourage others to take on leadership responsibility in future.
- Should the Jewish Center allow public statements in its name without broad consultation with the Congregation?
- Should we convene a small group to draft guidelines for TJC concerning public statements on controversial matters?
- Can we prevent TJC from appearing in the planned future issues of this ad in Town Topics?
- 501(c)(3) issue is a red herring. Advocating in favor of BDS or not taking a stand places our children at risk.
- Recall Rabbi Feldman's sermon yesterday on the need for compromise. We are egalitarian in all respects.
- The Board can't speak on behalf of all of us. Opinions are very nuanced. This is an effort to censor people.
- We should oppose racism in all of its forms.
- In 1933 Nazis conducted boycotts against Jews. Boycotts have consequences.

Randy Brett thanked congregants for their contributions and committed to issuing a statement to the whole congregation responding to the questions asked.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the August Board meetings were approved, see www.thejewishcenter.org/Resources/Board-Minutes.aspx.

5. **Finance report**

5.1 See the July Financial Dashboard (Attachment B). Warren Mitlak's report:

- Dues and Tuition collections are ahead of this year's budget. We are behind the 2018 fiscal year-to-date numbers but that may be because the High Holidays starts three secular weeks later this year and because there were a number of congregants that had not billed their annual dues until the beginning of August.

- We will have a good picture of whether we will meet the Dues and Tuition budget revenue numbers by the end of September because members are required to pay 25% of their dues to receive their High Holiday tickets.
 - Paid membership is about steady from May. We had 454 member units in May and 453 member units as of August 14. There were 238 household memberships as of Aug 14, 2019 vs 246 at the last year (Jun 13, 2019).
 - We gained 5 Senior Couple members (from 99 to 104) which would imply that some households converted to the Senior Couple category.
 - The High Holiday security budget is estimated to be \$20k vs \$5k that we had budgeted. We are looking into ways to make up the difference.
 - Buildings are \$21k over budget as unanticipated repairs to the school retaining walls were required in August.
 - We are working with Non Profit Accounting on a two page Dashboard that will include membership and school enrollment numbers for this year and last year on a separate page. This will make it easier to see the trends in membership and school enrollment. We should be able to send out the new format by the next meeting.
- 5.2 James Rosenberg asked why he received fee commitment forms along with his High Holiday materials. Exec Director Sandy Wilson explained that forms were sent out in July and only those who did not respond were sent further forms with the HH material. 80% of members responded to the first mailing. Bob Schwartz asked why 20% did not respond and Sandy said the administration is persistent in following up.
- 5.3 There was a discussion on whether annual fund contributions should be sought at the same time as membership dues. On the one hand this might increase participation, on the other hand, the amount of money involved is significant especially for young families with children in religious school and also still paying the capital assessment. Further, we did not wish to ask for donations at the same time as we were asking people to buy Gala tickets.
- 5.4 Ed Simon asked why we now ask members to opt in to Men's Club and JCW when previous policy required an opt out. Randy said he would review past minutes to see why the change was made.

6. **New Committees**

- 6.1 Randy introduced Naomi Richman-Neumann who is chairing a new committee, Dues and Fee Structures, to rethink how we finance TJC. Committee members are Nat Bottigheimer, Leah Boustan, Fred Edelman, Drew Greenspan, Neal Masia, Mara Olmstead, and Sally Steinberg-Brent. Naomi explained that the committee will seek comments from congregants and non-congregants, focus groups, the Board, etc. Considerable material is available from previous studies at TJC and from USCJ.
- 6.2 Recent events have demonstrated that the by-laws are silent on some important matters, for example, who is responsible during the President's absence. Randy has appointed a Governance Committee, to be chaired by Nicole Soffin and Robert Schwartz, to recommend changes to the way TJC is run. This is not intended to be a by-laws review but a higher level examination of possible improvements.
- 6.3 Randy also thought that recent events revealed differences in the community that will not be addressed through by-law changes. We need personal contact and discussion to help improve the community and stem constant criticism. Helaine Isaacs pointed out that she was a member of the Israel Dialogue Initiative Committee, several years ago, and does not want us to return to the tumult of those

times. The clearest finding of surveys at that time was that *shalom bayit* is the highest priority for us. It might be productive to revisit the committee's recommendations. Randy explained that Harold Heft is chairing a new committee on Israel dialogue. He will mention this in his statement to the congregation.

7. **Draft Policy on Weapons** (see Attachment C)

- 7.1 Lew Gantwerk moved to approve the draft, Helaine Isaacs seconded. Discussion followed.
- 7.2 Ed Simon explained that the motivation for the policy was to provide clarity for the bag check being instituted during High Holidays. We need a policy to define what to do if a weapon is found. James Rosenberg asked that if and when the policy is issued a cover statement should explain the background.
- 7.3 Kim Marks said that this policy was born from a desire to protect our community, which is commendable. But she wishes us to acknowledge that if we pass this policy, we will have done nothing to make our community safer. That work must be done outside our synagogue and that work is addressing anti-Semitism and taking a stand against it. Her children and the children of other members have been victims of recent anti-Semitism here and around the country. Every time that anti-Semitism goes unanswered, a new societal precedent is set. And every time that we as Jewish leaders fail to address anti-Semitism, we legitimize it. Kim stated that she is therefore unable to vote for this policy and hopes that her no vote will cause people to reflect. She does not believe that disarming and gagging ourselves makes us safer.
- 7.4 Three amendments were suggested. First, the policy should allow the President and the Executive Director to appoint designees to approve the carrying of a weapon. Second, the policy should also cover events sponsored by TJC. Third, include box cutters as a banned item. All were accepted.
- 7.5 Michelle Bellows asked if bag checks will be standard practice throughout the year. Kim explained that the security policy, under development, will include this.
- 7.6 The motion to adopt the weapons policy was passed by a vote of 13 in favor, 1 against, and 1 abstention.

8. **70th Anniversary Gala**

As of Friday Sept. 6th the net income for the Gala stood at \$115,000 against a budget plan of \$70,000, however, \$18,000 in sponsorships remains uncollected. Proclamations have been made by the Governor of New Jersey, Princeton and Plainsboro.

9. **Other Business**

Randy said that there will be a Board meeting at 7pm on September 23rd for training in High Holiday security procedures.

Meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Minutes recorded by Bernard Abramson

Attachment A

An everyday Hebrew expression for which there is no simple English equivalent, is “Mah pit’om”? It can be variously translated as: “What the _____?” “Where is this coming from?” “Since when?” or “Why on earth?”

I had a “mah pit’om” reaction to news coming from this Board several times this past week.

The Johnson Amendment of the U.S. tax code clearly states that we are not to endorse or oppose political candidates. Attempting an end run by deleting the name of the candidate you are targeting does not make it any less political, nor does hiding behind a reference to a pre-existing endorsement. Mah pit’om?

What was the urgent need, fully six weeks after a resolution passed in the House, that allowed no time for discussion of past events since the last Board meeting but required an emergency vote via email? Mah pit’om?

I know that the diversity of opinion at TJC regarding Israel-related issues reflects the diversity of opinions across the American Jewish community and across American Jewish organizations. (I for one am very proud of this diversity.) It is also clear from the last decade that reaching consensus among us on these issues is divisive, inflammatory, and nearly impossible. We can’t even have an Israeli Affairs committee! Why, then, would 30 Board members cast their votes to endorse a measure that they know reflects only one position among our nearly 600 member households? Why jeopardize our very fragile sh’lom bayit? Mah pit’om?

If the Board really wants to support, help, and express its love for our Israeli brothers and sisters, why not spend a fraction of this time educating itself about the current Israeli government’s shabby treatment of its own minorities, including but not limited to: non-Jews other than Muslims, Ethiopian Jews, and non-Orthodox Jews like us? Then you could really make a difference.

Lastly – I said mah pit’om just yesterday upon hearing for the first time that this “endorsement-within-an-ad” is scheduled to appear three more times in Town Topics. To this I say, in Hebrew and in English, NO. Not in my name.

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Attachment B – Finance

TJC Financial Dashboard

	July 31, 2019 YTD Actual	July 31, 2019 YTD Budget	Variance	July 31, 2019 YTD Actual
Operational Revenue				
Dues	234,560	182,875	51,685	368,776
Security Assessments/Donations	23,895	17,415	6,480	-
Capital Assessments	13,119	9,605	3,514	38,885
CapEx & Building Development Fund	14,834	-	14,834	-
Other	17,489	15,021	2,468	13,360
Operational Expenses				
Professional Salaries	(97,159)	(93,033)	(4,125)	(93,956)
Buildings	(63,112)	(41,956)	(21,156)	(49,834)
Administration	(21,188)	(17,113)	(4,075)	(19,521)
Membership	(1,653)	(2,692)	1,039	(2,316)
Mortgage Debt Service	(12,177)	(12,176)	(1)	(12,177)
Finance	(17,086)	(13,418)	(3,668)	(13,575)
CapEx	-	-	-	(7,178)
Information Systems	(2,999)	(7,166)	4,167	(5,529)
USCJ Dues	-	-	-	-
Security	(13,697)	(9,721)	(3,976)	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Operational Expenses Subtotal	(229,070)	(197,275)	(31,795)	(204,087)
Operational Net	36,097	10,226	25,872	216,935
Education				
Education Revenue	38,640	22,947	15,693	54,183
Education Expenses	(35,686)	(52,601)	16,915	(38,506)
Education Net	2,955	(29,654)	32,609	15,677
Fundraising				
Annual Fund Income	8,111	8,111	(1)	2,339
Contributions	2,708	2,708	-	1,599
Security Grant	49,697	50,000	(304)	-
Other Fundraising (Events)	84,334	-	84,334	175
Fundraising Expense	(3,265)	(755)	(2,510)	(20,343)
Fundraising Net	91,888	10,064	81,824	(16,230)
Programming, Committees, Other				
Revenue	33,166	17,038	16,128	25,710
Expense	(33,652)	(23,427)	(10,225)	(15,015)
Net	(485)	(6,389)	5,904	10,695
Restricted Funds				
Revenue	8,129	-	8,129	20,997
Expense	(6,949)	-	(6,949)	(15,245)
Net	1,180	-	1,180	5,752
Total Revenue	528,681	325,720	202,961	526,024
Total Expenses	(308,621)	(274,058)	(34,563)	(293,195)
Net Income	220,061	51,662	168,399	232,829

Membership as of 8/14/19		
Category	# Families	\$ Billed
Household	238	646,062
Single	36	59,232
Senior Couple	104	168,681
Senior Single	75	69,750
Subtotal	453	943,725
Associate	4	1,440
Friend	-	-
Remissions	8	6,632
Non-Paying*	39	-
Total	504	951,797
FTE @ full household dues		349

*Non-Paying includes 4 Exploratory, 0 Young Household, 12 Clergy, 10 Staff and 13 Exempt

School Enrollment as of 8/14/19		
Grade	# Children	\$ Billed
Yad B' Yad	1	-
Ganon	4	700
Gan Katan	4	3,408
Gan	5	4,260
Alef	9	6,816
Bet	13	11,076
Gimmel	10	12,890
Daled	21	27,069
Heh	15	16,857
Vav	23	29,325
Zayin	24	38,976
Sulam	21	16,560
Total	150	167,936

Attachment C

DRAFT

The Jewish Center

Policy on Weapons

DRAFT -- DOCUMENT IN PROGRESS. DO NOT FORWARD, COPY OR DISSEMINATE

Weapons are not permitted on The Jewish Center property, or at facilities rented by The Jewish Center for any purpose.

Weapons include, but are not limited to, guns, knives or swords with blades over four inches in length, explosives, and any chemical whose purpose is to cause harm to another person.

No one will be allowed onto our grounds or into our buildings possessing weapons, regardless of their possession of right-to-carry permit. No one will be permitted into our buildings who refuses an arms check prior to entering if requested.

Sole Exception: Possession of a weapon can be authorized jointly by the TJC President and Executive Director to allow hired private security personnel and police to have a weapon on TJC property when this possession is determined necessary to for the safety and security of our members and guests. Only the joint authorization from Executive Director and TJC President may approve the carrying of a weapon onto TJC grounds, as defined above.

FINAL

The Jewish Center

Policy on Weapons

Weapons are not permitted on The Jewish Center property, or at facilities rented by The Jewish Center or at events sponsored by The Jewish Center for any purpose.*

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