



General Board Meeting - July 12, 2020

Present:

Barbara Abramson	Helaine Isaacs	Naomi Richman-Neumann
Alexandra Bar-Cohen	Bret Jacknow	Lynne Ross
Joel Berger	Heidi Joseph	Adam Scheer
Rachelle Berkman	Edye Kamenir	Rabbi Elliot Schoenberg
Randy Brett	Judy Kutin	Robert Schwartz
Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges	Jenny Ludmer	Jay Schnitzer
Dane Dickler	Moshe Margolin	Ed Simon
Josh Eisenberg	Andrea Martinez	Nicole Soffin
Martin Ettenberg	Joshua McCoy	Polly Strauss
Michael Goldin (guest)	Linda Meisel	Tom Will
Samantha Hirschberg	Lauren Neufeld	

Minutes:

1. Meeting called to order at 5:03 PM and was held via video conference.
2. **D'var Torah** was delivered by Naomi Richman Neumann about change management and Mattot-Massei.
3. **Approval of Minutes**
The minutes of the June 7, 2020 Board meeting were approved unanimously in a motion made by Joshua McCoy and seconded by Barbara Abramson. See www.thejewishcenter.org/Resources/Board-Minutes.aspx.
4. **Safety Committee Report - Naomi Richman-Neumann**
 - 4.1 Safety Plan Submitted for Review by the Board - Distributed for Review Prior to Meeting
 - The first phase starts with a very small number of people and then gradually moves to an increasing number of people. The plan requires people to be symptom-free, agree to have temperature checked, wear masks, and maintain 6 feet of social distance among other requirements.
 - 4.2 Motion Made to Approve
 - A motion was made by Moshe Margolin and seconded by Linda Meisel to approve the recommendation of the Committee.
 - 4.3 Discussion & Points of Clarification on the Plan

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- Judy Kutin requested clarification around several issues: 1) Concern around the optics of children under 13 not being permitted. She would like to see language around children in the building softened. Josh Ettenberg (Safety Committee Co-Chair) explained that phase 1 is a trial and is conservative by nature. In phase 2, children under 13 are permitted, as long as they practice social distancing and wear face masks.
- Rachelle Berkman and Andrea Martinez questioned what offerings would be available for children and young families at this time. Andrea requested clarification on whether children under 13 are permitted at SERVICES specifically in phases 2 and beyond. Linda Meisel reminded us that this is just a trial period, but perhaps we need to address the language around children's in person attendance more clearly in the later phases.
- Joshua McCoy raised a question about signing up for services in advance, but what happens with walk-in attendees. Randy Brett said that the results of the recent congregational survey support those observing yahrzeits and reciting kaddish should get priority for in-person attendance slots, which will be limited according to the policy.
- Judy Kutin requested more clarification and transparency on when we go from one phase to another. Josh Ettenberg responded that the signals are state numbers, county numbers, and transmission rates in NJ (noting the NJ increased for the first time in 2 months, indicating more cases over the next few weeks). This information changes almost weekly. That would be out of scope for this document. Randy Brett said that we will have to rely on the committee to guide us through the process.
- Jenny Ludmer noted that there is no singing permitted in phase 1, but it was less clear about singing in subsequent phases; also need to address chanting. Josh Ettenberg responded that they were intentionally vague on singing. A church in NY had a massive outbreak after singing in a service. The report is trying to be sufficiently vague, so that as more evidence becomes available, it can be addressed. Josh McCoy asked about where there is any information about risk of singing while wearing a mask to reduce risk to others. Josh Ettenberg said there is no reliable study at this point, and compliance with actual mask usage in past cases isn't clear.
- Lauren Neufeld read this report as this is how we are going to keep our congregation safe. She noted that this document was overwhelmingly thorough, and suggested there could be an asterisk noting that TJC welcomes families with children to our Zoom offerings and where they can find them.
- Heidi Joseph suggested the committee send out a video message to the congregation giving an update on status, so the congregation would be privy to the decision-making process and metrics at any given point.

4.4 Call for Vote (with proviso that word changes are addressed)

- Motion passed (27-1-1)
- Randy Brett will appoint a small committee to implement and will provide an update.

4.5 Survey Update

- Randy Brett provided several observations on the survey, which doesn't close until the day after this meeting. Initial sentiment is that first priority should go to those reciting kaddish, followed by those celebrating aufrufs and baby namings. Randy had hoped that the first gathering in the building would be this coming Shabbat, but, unfortunately, that will be pushed back by a week.

4.6 Update on Safety Measures Taken To Date

- Joel Berger, Executive Director, provided an update on safety enhancements taken to date, including: cleaning; painting; ropes to direct traffic; one way routes mapped and marked; all Siddurim cleaned, wiped and disinfected; acrylics placed around podium, reading tables, and in offices; masks and single use kippot have been ordered; removal of the tallisim for borrowing; purchase of temporal thermometers, face shields, disposable microphone covers, N95 masks for clergy, Purell stations, Clorox wipes, and a backpack device to spray all surfaces in sanctuary to ensure cleanliness and safety.
- K Street have retained EMTs on staff who are HIPPA certified to take temperatures. Joel mentioned that he is trying to think ahead of what could possibly happen and be prepared for when we do finally re-open in person.
- Michael Goldin raised the question of installing UVC lights as a disinfectant approach based on sources he has read. Martin Ettenberg responded that the virus is not coming from the ventilation system itself, but more from the ventilation system blowing the air around, and, therefore, solutions such as this are not a good use of resources based on current knowledge.

4.7 Discussion Related to Re-Opening Protocol and Impact on B'nai Mitzvah Families

- Bret Jacknow raised the question of b'nai mitzvah families and how to allocate spots in the various phases to permit the b'nai mitzvah families to have more than just immediate family members present. Barbara Abramson mentioned that much of this will depend on demand and agrees that Kaddish-reciters should have priority, but also b'nai mitzvah families. Randy Brett mentioned that preliminary results of the survey show that most people aren't likely to want to come into the synagogue. It's an important issue, and we need to set out the criteria.

5. Discussion on Plans for the High Holidays

5.1 Randy shared the decision of the Tri-County Board of Synagogues to have virtual services for High Holidays this year. Other synagogues in the area are likely not opening for the holidays, as well. There are a number of groups that are working on preparations and need to be able to plan. We also need to educate and inform our own congregants if we need to move to virtual services for High Holidays this year.

5.2 Discussion About Whether to Hold High Holiday Services In-Person or Virtually

- Joshua McCoy believes that we need to be realistic about the fact that we are not in a position to open safely for the High Holidays. He believes we need to focus efforts on designing HH services as creative as possible virtually.
- Moshe Margolin believes there is a high percentage of our congregants that have questions and concerns and doesn't expect much pushback to moving to virtual services - if coupled with the information on how we will celebrate virtually together.
- Barbara Abramson raised the point that doing both in person and virtual programming would require preparing two full sets of services, which would be a strain on resources.
- Tom Will believes that running two sets of services would be very challenging and believes we need to make the best possible HH service programming in a virtual environment.

5.3 Feasibility and Planning Discussion Around How to Make Virtual HH Services Work

- Polly Strauss said that planning meetings are focusing on how to make services for High Holidays as engaging and creative as possible in order to create a meaningful and memorable experience in spite of the current circumstances.
- Naomi Richman-Neuman believes we have to be virtual for services this year and hopes that the working committees can explore some type of in-person opportunity to hear the shofar, along with one or two other key High Holiday components in order to have some tangible contact, perhaps the weekend before, to reinforce to our members the importance of community.
- Heidi Joseph believes we also need to do something fun for the kids in order to engage them.
- Polly Strauss added there will be multiple age groups and multi-generational approaches to considered in the design of the High Holidays experience this year.
- Alexandra Bar-Cohen is in favor of remote High Holiday services, but posed the consideration that some of the more traditional and observant congregants would be uncomfortable with the use of technology on the holiday. Polly Strauss says the committee is aware of that and trying to figure out ways to engage those who may not use technology during this time.
- Moshe Margolin suggested a brochure like Adult Education publishes every year outlining what is going on for the High Holidays this year to help people feel connected.
- Rachelle Berkman raised the question about a socially-distanced, masked children's service, since children will likely be back in school at that point in some way. Randy Brett said the Education Committee, Sharon Diamondstein, and Daryl Rothman can address that point.

- Barbara Abramson raised the question of availability of Machzorim for virtual participants to follow along at home. Joel Berger shared his plans for a "High Holiday Survival Kit," including the machzor, yahrzeit brochure, and other ritual items to feel part of the community even though they are at home. Randy Brett said that we can't replicate the experience of being in shul, but we can enhance the sense of community involvement at this time. Joshua McCoy said other area synagogues are providing a link to purchase machzorim at a discount. Helaine Isaacs suggested we need to have a delivery team to get the survival kits out there as an alternative to pick-ups as another way to connect with congregants over the holidays.

5.4 A motion was made by Alexandra Bar-Cohen and seconded by Bret Jacknow to move High Holiday services to a virtual model this year. The motion passed unanimously with one abstention.

6. Membership Outreach Discussion - Bret Jacknow

6.1 Bret discussed the idea of member outreach that he e-mailed the Board about earlier today. This effort started in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis in order to provide outreach and connection, as well as to understand if there were any needs we could address. First set of calls were made in March, then the second wave in April/May. The idea is to do a similar exercise to connect with the community, but also to form a committee to continue this effort 2-3 times per year to pull people closer into the community and gather information about their interests and what the shul can do better for them. Bret will put together a speaker notes sheet. Timing is likely this summer before the High Holidays.

6.2 Randy Brett reminded the Board that Shabbat of Appreciation will be held next Saturday to thank our volunteers, including the Board.

7. "After the Crisis" Working Group Report - Moshe Margolin & Michael Goldin

7.1 Overview of the Working Group

- Moshe introduced the task of the working group as figuring out the role of continued virtual offerings once TJC re-opens.
- The group composition reflects the balance of the congregation in age, gender and religious observance.
- Moshe noted the intelligence and commitment level of the group's members.

7.2 Findings and Conclusions of the Working Group

- The group reached several conclusions about the future of technology:
 - 1) The relationship between TJC and its congregants has shifted dramatically;

2) The ways in which people choose to connect to the community are unique - our job as lay leaders is to connect people across the community. We need to provide multiple pathways into the community and make people feel comfortable in the community.

3) The more actively engaged a member is, the more comfortable he or she feels. The more members feel at home, the more likely they will assume leadership roles;

4) Even after TJC opens, the working group recommends that services and programs should continue to be offered remotely. But a balance must be struck.

- Michael Goldin talked about specific recommendations:
 - 1) The formation of a permanent technology working group reporting to the Board and President to continually re-evaluate how technology should be used to reach all segments of the community. How accessible is technology to segments of congregation? How balanced are we between IRL and virtual offerings?
 - 2) TJC should enhance its website to include selective links to the wider Jewish community;
 - 3) For programs that charge a fee, congregants should pay the same fee whether they attend in person or virtually. Security protocols should be investigated to avoid sharing links to gain unauthorized admittance;
 - 4) Isolation is difficult for homebound congregants, and we should do everything we can to connect them and provide tablets and free internet access to those who can't afford them. They also recommended on-going outreach to congregants, carpool buddies, and phone buddies in order to provide assistance to congregants who need additional resources.
 - 5) New members and visitors should be made to feel welcome, so it is the view of the working group that it would be highly beneficial to create a volunteer group to act as hosts.
 - 6) The goal is to reach all congregants on a continuous basis, and we should do all the things we can right now to ensure the strength of the community post-crisis. Those who emerge stronger audit their offerings, improve them, and make them stronger, while identifying new ways to get their offerings to more people.
- The full report of the working group will be sent to the Board next week.

7.3 Randy Brett thanked the chairs of the committee and its members for their hard work and thoughtful recommendations.

7.4 Naomi Richman-Neumann raised the point that we likely won't be back in the building in person for medium to long term, so how can the committee pull forward as many of the recommendations as possible? She mentioned the recommendation of charging for programs contradicting the approach many other businesses and communities have taken of providing more content and services for free at this time. Moshe responded that bringing the best programming will likely cost money - particularly for the multi-part series.

7.5 Additional discussion will occur at the next Board meeting on August 23.

8. Update on ShulCloud Implementation - Randy Brett

- 8.1 Randy noted that we are waiting to sign the contract, which we hope to implement within the next few months. It will be a database program that can be used to harvest and manage information, in addition to the financial management and tracking features. It was already budgeted for. A complete overhaul of TJC's website will be part of the implementation process.

9. Finance Update - Dane Dickler

- 9.1 Year end numbers through May 30 have been posted. Dane noted that numbers at this point are close to final, but subject to small adjustments.

9.2 P&L Statement Review

- On P&L statement for the year, Dane noted that dues are down from last year to this year, as well as down relative to budget. Total revenue is down ~ \$40K, and education revenue is down ~\$93K for a total decrease of ~ \$135K. As time goes on and congregation continues to age, the trend will continue. The Religious School costs \$350K with \$185K revenue contribution. Subsidy amounts to about \$800 per student.
- Equivalized full membership units declined from 355 to 339.
- Dane noted that the expense side was more straightforward and followed predictions relative to the budget. He noted Capex was down versus last year, because we had fewer building and maintenance issues relative to the previous year. Security expenses went up last year due to High Holidays security protocol. This was offset by the \$75K collected in the security fee relative to the cost of about \$90K. He noted that we do receive a security grant from the state - last year was \$50K - and we hope to receive something this year, as well.
- Additional income came from 70th Anniversary Gala in September 2019.

9.3 Questions and comments from Board Members

- Lauren Neufeld asked how much money in the budget was donated in memory of RAF z"l. Randy Brett answered that we don't have that information available at this time.
- Helaine Isaacs asked if PPP (Payroll Protection Program from COVID-19 Relief Bill passed by Congress) money was in last year's budget. Dane answered that it will be booked as income in last fiscal year. When that loan moves to forgiven, that will be income in this fiscal year.
- A question was raised about rates of return on the membership forms. Joel Berger answered that ~225 of 500 have been turned in.

- Dane mentioned that we have not had a ton of requests for remissions.

10. Remissions Policy Discussion

10.1 Background

- Randy Brett was not able to find a Board-approved policy on remissions, so he asked Naomi Richman-Neumann, Dane Dickler and Warren Mitlak to draft an official policy for the Board to consider.
- Naomi reminded everyone that last year's Alternate Dues Committee received a great deal of feedback on the current remissions policy, because it seemed intrusive and asked for so much detailed financial information. The current approach has been a barrier to membership. Many should have applied based on need, but didn't want to because the process was somewhat onerous. So the goal was to streamline the process with a lower income amount associated with lower dues.
- The new policy puts people on the honor system to a certain degree, because it doesn't require detailed financial information.
- It is important to have an official and consistent policy in place for this coming year, when income might be down versus prior years, given the state of the economy.
- The policy was circulated for review prior to the meeting.

10.2 Discussion and Questions

- Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges raised a question relative to the Religious School, with double income family and small business income uncertainty. Can we uncouple RS dues remissions from Membership dues remissions?
- Former Financial Secretaries appreciate having a tool like a policy to help administer the process, because so many different things have to be accounted for. Other Financial Secretaries still feel the need to have some leeway in the policy based on personal judgment and extenuating circumstances.
- Jenny Ludmer believes the financial levels outlined in the proposed policy seem reasonable for a single person, but a family of 5 has a very different expense profile than a household of one or two members.
- Joshua McCoy noted most synagogues in his experience don't have such a policy, and this is a great tool.
- Tom Will emphasized the need to have the Financial Secretary needs to have leeway and the final say.

- Moshe Margolin noted that a set of guidelines needs to be accompanied with the stated intent and transparency - with the goal of making people be part of the community, regardless of financial status, as well as for the fiscal soundness of the congregation.
- Naomi Richman-Neumann clarified that the guidelines are the starting point, and the policy notes that circumstances differ by family. Examples are noted in the policy and will be included in the communication of the policy to the congregation.
- Helaine Isaacs asked if there was a separate source of money to cover remissions or scholarships to Religious School? Randy Brett said there is not, and the budget just gets adjusted downward to reflect the lower anticipated revenue associated with households on remissions.

10.3 Motion to Adopt the Remissions Policy

- Moshe Margolin made a motion to accept the proposed Remissions Policy, which was seconded by Joshua McCoy
- Linda Meisel mentioned that family size should be specifically addressed in the policy, which is not currently the case
- Motion passed unanimously

11. Reminder of Upcoming Events

11.1 Randy Brett reminded the Board of the upcoming Shabbat of Appreciation on July 18

11.2 Randy reminded the Board of a new Board Meeting added to the calendar on 8/23

12. Old Business

12.1 Request for Board Members to Sign-Up to Volunteer to Present the Gifts to the B'nai Mitzvah Students for this coming year - Contact Polly Strauss

12.2 Linda Meisel acknowledged the Safety & Security Committee for their thoughtfulness in their recommendations and the time they have dedicated to TJC's re-opening approach. Randy Brett reinforced the point and added his thanks.

13. Good & Welfare

13.1 Joel Berger recently marked the end of shloshim following the passing of his beloved mother, Gloria z"l, and wanted to thank everyone for their thoughtfulness and support during this time.

14. Adjournment

14.1 The meeting went into Executive Session at 7:04PM.

Minutes recorded by Edye Kamenir