



Special Board Meeting - September 30, 2020

Present:

Barbara Abramson	David Greenberg	Joshua McCoy
Alexandra Bar-Cohen	Samantha Hirschberg	Linda Meisel
Joel Berger	Helaine Isaacs	Lauren Neufeld
Rachelle Berkman	Bret Jacknow	Naomi Richman-Neumann
Randy Brett	Heidi Joseph	Lynne Ross
Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges	Edye Kamenir	Adam Scheer
Dane Dickler	Nancy Lewis	Polly Strauss
Martin Ettenberg	Moshe Margolin	

Minutes:

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:03 PM and was held via video conference. The meeting was called specifically to address the proposal raised at the last General Board Meeting on 9/17/2020 regarding a discount on Religious School Tuition.

2. **Motion**

A motion was made by Linda Meisel and seconded by Joshua McCoy to consider the Young Member Retention Proposal to provide a tuition reduction for Religious School families.

3. **Proposal Presentation - Rachelle Berkman**

- Rachelle presented the formal background of the proposal, dimensionalising the impact of COVID on families, in addition to the outsized financial burden on this cohort with tuition, dues, and, in most cases, capital assessment.
- Enrollment in the Religious School as of this meeting date is 126 students, relative to the 255 students enrolled in the 2016-2017 school year.
- The costs for a Household Membership with two children in Religious School totals over \$6000 annually.
- The proposal is to offer a 25% discount on Religious School tuition for each student for the 2020-2021 school year, which equates to approximately \$322 per student.
- The maximum cost of the discount to TJC's bottom line would be \$50,000 based on the assumption of 140 students enrolled.
- Questions raised in the previous meeting were addressed: 1) Is 25% a sufficient discount to address the goal of retention? ; 2) Can the option of donating the tuition reduction be offered?; 3) Will this tuition reduction appear as a "devaluation" of the Religious School offering?
- The group acknowledged the need for a full evaluation and reconsideration of how the Religious School is funded in the long term; this proposal is just a stop-gap measure in the interim.

- Randy Brett added that he believes the proposal is a good first step to address a particularly hard hit sector of our membership. He added that he has asked Alexandra Bar-Cohen to spearhead an effort to evaluate TJC's financial structure going forward. The goal is to hear preliminary thinking on that topic mid-year with a final proposal at the end of the fiscal year in May 2021.
- Randy also noted that the teachers are doing an exemplary job, and a discount is in no way a reflection on their performance. The proposal is a response to a very acute need right now.

4. Open Questions and Comments

- Moshe Margolin raised the point that communication of this proposal, if passed will be very important. The focus should be on what the proposal IS and not what it IS NOT. It should be clear that the tuition reduction is a response to the added pressure on families and a sign of the congregation's appreciation of their continued participation in the community.
- Helaine Isaacs agreed that communication is critical. Board members should see themselves as ambassadors of communicating this proposal, if passed, and the appropriate positioning of the tuition reduction to other membership cohorts. There are other members of the community who also feel an acute sense of loss of community and will also feel entitled to a discount.
- Bret Jacknow asked if there is a plan to call Religious School families who did not sign up for this school year to inform them of such a decision if passed?
- Linda Meisel responded that there is a plan to do so, but for families of children Pre-K to Grade 2, the main barrier to enrollment may be avoidance of more screen time for the youngest children.
- Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges added that Sharon Diamondstein had reached out to every family who did not re-enroll for this school year and asked them why they made that decision. Therefore, more calls may be viewed as excessive, and calls should be targeted to those for whom finances were cited as the barrier.
- Randy mentioned that prior to the meeting, he asked Linda and Rachelle to think about communication to the rest of the congregation in positioning of the proposal.
- Linda clarified that the tuition reduction would be treated as a credit on families' TJC account. TJC will not be issuing refund checks.
- Joel Berger reiterated that point and added that the credit could be applied to tuition or dues.

6. Vote on the Proposal to Offer a 25% Tuition Reduction Credit for Each Religious School Student for the 2020-2021 School Year

- The motion passed unanimously.

7. Adjournment

7.1 The meeting was adjourned at 8:25PM in a motion made by Naomi Richman-Neumann and seconded by Heidi Joseph.

Minutes recorded by Edye Kamenir