



General Board Meeting - February 21, 2021

Present:

Barbara Abramson	Samantha Hirschberg	Lauren Neufeld
Alexandra Bar-Cohen	Helaine Isaacs	Naomi Richman-Neumann
Joel Berger	Heidi Joseph	Lynne Ross
Rachelle Berkman	Edye Kamenir	Adam Scheer
Randy Brett	Judy Kutin	Rabbi Elliott Schoenberg
Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges	Nancy Lewis	Ed Simon
Dane Dickler	Jenny Ludmer	Nicole Soffin
Josh Eisenberg	Moshe Margolin	Polly Strauss
Martin Ettenberg	Joshua McCoy	Tom Will

Minutes:

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:33PM and was held via video conference. Randy Brett kicked off the meeting by announcing the good news that Rabbi Andrea Merow will become the Rabbi of The Jewish Center effective July 1, 2021. Randy extended his gratitude and appreciation to Polly Strauss and Dana Molina, Co-Chairs of the Rabbi Search Committee, as well as the entire Committee for all of their hard work. The congregation owes them a debt of gratitude. Randy also announced that Jen Black and Harry Cummins will be the Co-Chairs of the Welcome and Transition Committee.

2. **D'var Torah** was delivered by Polly Strauss, who started off by thanking everyone for supporting the Rabbi Search Committee over the last year and thanking the members of the Committee for their hard work and dedication. Parsha Terumah is the parsha for the coming week. Polly posited that there must be great importance to the tabernacle given the amount of space devoted to the instructions for building it in the Torah. Terumah acts as a charge for all of us to recreate the tabernacle of our community to come back together and engage all of our talents and skills to emerge stronger from this period. Let's rededicate ourselves to rebuild our spiritual community with our new leader, where if you pause for a moment, you can feel G-d's presence.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

- The minutes of the November 15, 2020 Board meeting were circulated prior to the meeting for review.
- The minutes of the November 15, 2020 Board meeting were approved unanimously in a motion made by Naomi Richman-Neuman and seconded by Joshua McCoy.
- See www.thejewishcenter.org/Resources/Board-Minutes.aspx.

4. Financial Review - Dane Dickler

4.1 Overview of Financial Dashboard

- With regard to Operating Revenue, the Dues and Security Assessment line items are down significantly versus prior year, but Total Operational Revenue is \$70K higher versus budget overall. This reflects the insurance policy and ULeague proceeds that are helping to balance the budget in spite of the Dues and Security Assessment shortfalls. The Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan forgiveness is not yet reflected in these numbers.
- Operating Expenses are in line with what was projected for the year. Operational Net is higher than what was projected. Randy noted that this is the lowest that CapEx (\$424) has ever been due to the fact that we have not had to deal with any major repairs this year.
- Annual Fund results are strong so far. Goal is \$250K, and we have collected \$212K as of the end of January. In the last two weeks, another \$1500 was collected, which is not yet reflected in the Dashboard numbers. In terms of participation, 174 congregants participated so far this year relative to 180 total last fiscal year. The average contribution is \$1228, which is up versus previous year. Most people are giving more or the same amount versus prior years.
- Net income is \$522K, which is above what was budgeted. Again, it is because of things mentioned earlier that are not replicable (insurance proceeds, ULeague).
- Twenty-nine people have not paid anything toward their dues for this year. School enrollment is still down, but we added 2-3 more students since November.

4.2 Balance Sheet Review

- Dane also shared the balance sheet to show TJC's cash position. Currently, we have \$1.7MM versus last year at this time \$1.4MM. A portion of this increase is the proceeds from the 2020 Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) loan of \$156K, and the remainder is the housing parsonage funds received back from Feldman-Bucholtz family.
- Randy asked if we had made any progress on applying for the new PPP loan for 2021. Dane started the first draft of the application and forwarded to Joel Berger for review and collaboration. \$168,240 will be the estimated amount of the next PPP loan, based on 2020 payroll (previous loan was based on 2019 payroll). We can apply up to March 31. Dane hopes to have the application in by the end of the week.
- Dane shared that we have also started to apply for loan forgiveness for the original PPP loan.
- Naomi Richman-Neuman asked where the money is sitting from the Rabbi Parsonage amount since the line item is zeroed out. Dane answered that it went into a TD Bank account as cash.

4.3 Questions and Discussion

- Heidi Joseph asked if the tuition remediation passed by the Board in the Fall had any effect on Religious School enrollment. Dane answered that it was done as a gesture of good will, not necessarily to attract new families. But there were 4 or 5 families that signed up for Religious School after the tuition remediation effort was put into effect.
- Helaine Isaacs asked what was the response from the 29 families who haven't paid anything toward their dues. Naomi said that they were sent multiple letters, and we are getting a diminishing level of response. Now either Joel Berger or Naomi are reaching out individually to each family by phone.

- Randy shared with the Board that there are two potential tenants for the Religious School space. One is a Montessori-type school, and the other is another school for different area of the building. Judy Kutin asked how we can justify having a school in the building, but not TJC children in for Religious School classes. Randy answered that these parties would not have students in the physical building until students can be there safely. Alexandra Bar-Cohen asked if the two tenants were 'either-or' or could the building possibly accommodate both tenants. Randy said that he is not sure at this point, but will keep us posted.

4.4 Budgeting Process Overview

- Dane sent e-mails with budget templates to all the VPs and the Finance Committee leads assigned to those VPs to begin the 2021-2022 budget process. He stated that we are a little ahead of schedule on the budget process relative to last year, and our congregational meeting, during which the upcoming year's budget is presented to the congregation for review, is being held on May 30 this year, which is a little later than last year.
- Ideally, Dane would like to present the draft budget to the EC and Board at the April meetings. To hit that timing, he hopes to have an initial draft to the Finance Committee for their meeting scheduled on March 25.
- If there are any questions during the budgeting process, please reach out to Joel Berger, your Finance Committee partner, or Dane.
- Heidi Joseph raised a challenge that no one knows what the future holds. To plan for multiple scenarios, she asked if each VP should come up with budgets for three scenarios: fully remote, hybrid, and fully in person. Dane said that is a good idea, but the reality is that it would be very time-consuming for people. The budget will be difficult to project, and we should try to be both realistic and optimistic. Joshua McCoy added that the budget is a living and breathing document and not etched in stone, and therefore, can be updated to reflect changing reality. Randy added that budgets are aspirational in nature anyway, and we are in good shape financially at this moment. Our cash position should be sufficiently strong at this point to carry us through. Therefore, being optimistic is justified.

5. Membership Update and Proposal - Naomi Richman Neumann

5.1 Update on Membership Committee Activities

- Naomi reported that the Membership Committee has been busy.
- They are sending Passover baskets to new members, and have been working to create additional touchpoints with new members.
- They have also been contacting members who put their memberships on hold this year with a "We want you back" campaign.
- They are also developing a list of "at risk" members and developing strategies to retain those members.

5.2 Proposal: Re-Vamp 'Friend of TJC' Membership Category

- We have a membership category called "Friend of TJC" for people who live 50+ miles away. They currently receive the bulletin, and they are on the e-mail list. Right now, we have one friend - Naomi's mother-in-law.

- However, the Membership Committee believes this category could be expanded and marketed to three groups: parents of members, adult children of members who have moved away, and former members who have moved away.
- The current fee is \$100. The Committee considered the value offered with the sheer volume and high quality of the virtual programming, and believes we could raise the amount to \$180.
- This proposal is considered new business, so it would be voted on during the next meeting. (New Business is not voted on in the same meeting in which it is proposed).
- Josh McCoy asked if this proposal is the same as a snowbird membership? No - because it does not include High Holiday tickets.
- Helaine Isaacs made the observation that most of our programs are free in the virtual world right now, so she believes that during the pandemic, raising the fee seems hard to do. Raising the fee to \$180 seems expensive and a potential barrier to joining. The \$100 fee seems more feasible.
- Heidi Joseph raised the point that we are offering all programs for free now, but going forward, even if the program is virtual, we do plan to charge for some programs. She asked if this membership category get the programs for free, and how would JCW events and Nosh and Drosh be treated? Naomi said that someone in this membership category would have to pay a non-member fee for in-person events.
- Ed Simon added the perspective that there may be members who have moved and still want to be a member of TJC and have a connection to the community. It's a mitzvah and an emotional connection that may be worth maintaining for many people even after they move away from the community.
- Alexandra Bar-Cohen observed that she has seen a metamorphosis from the beginning of the pandemic from free content to subscription payments for access to a content library.
- Lauren Neufeld asked, using Nosh and Drosh as an example, if some people who live 50+ miles away may avail themselves of this membership category and may choose to drive that far to come to in-person activities. That may prompt full members who pay their JCW fee to feel like they shouldn't have to pay either, which may upset people. Randy said they are all good points and the team needs to consider.
- Edey Kamenir raised the point about looking at the whole dues structure in total, because with this incremental step, we are fixing a problem that isn't the largest one in the dues structure. She also added that people may trade down from full membership to this category, resulting in lost revenue instead of increased revenue. Naomi clarified that this category already exists, so it is just a matter of marketing it.
- Randy asked Naomi and Alexandra to put their heads together to solve some of the questions raised.

6. Executive Director Update - Joel Berger

Joel highlighted several key points from his report that was circulated prior to the meeting.

6.1 Personnel Updates

- Emily Kafas is starting on March 1 to be TJC's new Social Media coordinator.
- Ethan Weg has been hired as TJC's new Youth Programming Coordinator. As Daryl Rothman is transitioning to Membership, Ethan will take on some of her responsibilities.

6.2 Other Updates

- Joel was thrilled to report that the Shul Cloud rollout is nearly complete.
- We have over 50 videos on the new TJC YouTube channel.
- Our website is being redesigned as part of the conversion to ShulCloud.
- We have a plan to upgrade the sound in the sanctuary, thanks to Martin Ettenberg and Bernie Fleitman. Cantor Warschauer has been involved in that plan every step of the way.
- Martin has also taken the lead to explore solar energy panels for our roof to help with our carbon footprint.
- Purim bags are being delivered over the next several days. Joel thanks all of the volunteers who are dropping them off at congregants' homes.
- We have a five day virtual trip to Israel planned for early April from 9:30 -11AM for five successive mornings that will be announced shortly.
- We have also been talking to potential tenants for the Religious School building and the kitchen.

6.3 Questions and Comments from the Board

- Helaine Isaacs asked for clarification on the transition in Daryl Rothman's role. Joel provided clarification, and a new job description for her new role and responsibilities is being drafted.
- Randy added that Bret Jacknow resigned from the Board due to personal commitments, and we thank him for his service.
- Nicole Soffin asked whether the intent for the new youth person would be to stay for the remainder of the year or to remain in role beyond the school year. Joel said that if he does well, we would look to keep him on. Nicole added that Daryl created such a strong connection with the teens and pre-teens, so some formal transition might be necessary. Joel assured Nicole that there will be a transition and that Daryl will continue to have some level of involvement.
- Nicole asked about the timing of the new sound system. Joel said that as soon as everything they have ordered arrives, it will be installed.
- Lauren Neufeld asked if when Emily starts if Committee Chairs could have a meeting with her to introduce themselves and make contact. Joel promised to do that, but not right away given how much she will have on her plate when she starts. He doesn't want to overwhelm her right off the bat. Lauren thanked Joel for all they are doing to make the LiveStream more aesthetically pleasing.
- Heidi Joseph gave a shout-out to Roni Garrison, as she has done so much for so many people for many months now. She believes we should do something to thank her as a Board, because she deserves the extra recognition. Randy said that we gave her a bonus last month.
- Samantha Hirschberg asked if the Social Media person's focus is more internally focused or focused on bringing in new members. Joel said that it's a combination. We need to find other avenues other than e-mail to get the word out. Nicole asked via chat whether Emily will be full-time. Naomi Richman-Neuman answered that it is full-time, as it is a re-purposing of Mary Ann Yarin's former role.

7. Bimah Project Update - Randy Brett

- Randy shared that two families have pledged a significant amount to the Bimah Project fundraising effort, so the effort is off to a good start. There are plans to kick-off the fundraising in a bigger way shortly.
- The Religious School will be doing some fundraising for the project using tzedakah boxes, so they can feel they are participating in the effort. It will be woven into teachings.
- Joshua McCoy offered his help to any group that is fundraising for this effort. He asked when will the official start of fundraising for this project will be. Randy answered that it will start within the next few weeks.
- Lauren Neufeld asked if it would be helpful to have the tzedakah boxes available when people do the Purim drive-through? Samantha Hirschberg answered that she will bring that idea up to Sharon.

8. Old Business

- There was no old business.

9. New Business

9.1 New Committees Announced

- Randy announced the formation of the 2021-2022 Nominating Committee, which will be tasked with filling the positions Executive Committee elected positions of Vice President of Religious Affairs, Vice President of Education, Vice President of Programming, and two Trustees. The composition of the Committee is determined by the by-laws. Bob Schwartz as outgoing Trustee will chair the Committee, and Nicole Soffin (also an outgoing Trustee), Helaine Isaacs, Debbie Orel, Ra'anah Boustan, Ed Simon, and Lori Feldstein will serve on the Committee. Randy thanked Edye Kamenir for meeting with Bob and sharing her experience and advice from chairing last year's Nominating Committee.
- Randy announced the formation of the Congregant of the Year Committee. Formation of that Committee is also determined by the by-laws. As a past recipient of the award, Linda Meisel will act as Chair, and Joel Berger, Alison Politziner, David Gaynor, Louise Sandberg, Suzanne Esterman, and Martin Ettenberg will serve on the Committee.
- Randy announced the formation of the Richard Fishbane Award Committee. The Committee will be chaired by David Greenberg. Committee formation is underway.

9.2 Concerns Raised Around Re-Opening Policies

- Judy Kutin raised the question of "With all of the progress in virus transmission rates and vaccines, how can we get more progress faster? What are we waiting for?"
- Joshua Eisenberg said the Safety Committee met earlier that day and agreed that the situation has improved since a month ago. Wearing masks indoors and social distancing of at least 6 feet will still be required. However, we have on-going outdoor activities, and there are no safety concerns with outdoor events - just weather. The Committee is eager to have more of the congregation vaccinated before we allow more indoor activities. We haven't reached any herd immunity to stop masking and social distancing. Judy said that

she is still struggling with our position, especially since state law allows 150 people indoors and no limit outdoors.

- Randy added that there are a number of factors to consider, and we are only getting 1 to 2 people going to Shabbat services in person aside from a b'nai mitzvah.
- Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges added that Ethan Weg, the new Youth Coordinator, plans to have more optional outdoor activities for Religious School children.
- Joshua McCoy asked why all the churches are all open and the synagogues are not? Randy answered that people are finding it so convenient to Zoom in, and this phenomenon is not unique to our situation based on what he has observed on the Presidents' Listserv.
- Heidi Joseph asked if we know how many of our congregants have been vaccinated? Randy answered that we do not know. Heidi asked if we are willing to ask people, because if we knew that x% are vaccinated, maybe we could make a decision about wider re-opening with a higher comfort level. Edye Kamenir raised the question of the legality of collecting and storing such information given HPPA laws.
- Moshe Margolin believes there is room for the Committees to be thinking about what we will be doing with the next normal. We should start to talk about the boundaries between in person, virtual and hybrid learning in order to start thinking about how to meet the new challenges.
- Randy asked Joshua Eisenberg to review current guidelines with the Safety Committee to see if we can safely revise those guidelines.
- AlexandraBar-Cohen asked if we think part of the reason we aren't getting many people in the building for services is that people have to sign up in advance? Joel expressed the concern of too many people showing up and who would enforce the limit on headcount and inform the people over the limit over the limit that they are not allowed inside.
- Barbara Abramson asked if people are allowed to sing. She added that Shabbat lunch was a great draw, and until we can restore that, numbers will be lower. Joshua Eisenberg answered that people can sing softly with masks in place to reduce droplet spread.
- There are a few b'nai mitzvah in March - can we have people volunteer to be a mask monitor? Randy added that we will need people to volunteer for mask monitoring, greeters, etc. - it is our responsibility as Board members. Randy added that contributing to Annual Fund is also a responsibility.
- Nicole Soffin said that we need to look at the singing issue. Whose definition is loud? Consensus is that singing is not a safe activity, even with masks, based on her daughter's Princeton Girl Choir experience.
- Joshua McCoy added that we have a large building, so he doubts we will have to turn people away. We have to seriously think about making a real transition from Zoom to in person. If we continue to provide virtual services, there will be no motivation for people to come to the building.
- Joel Berger added that even when we open, we will continue to provide Zoom and Livestream services. We also need to talk about ventilation and ionization systems. Those are large costs. There are many steps to take before we consider full re-opening.
- Lauren Neufeld asked for clarity around b'nai mitzvah and sanitation concerns about having motzi, drinking from the Kiddush cup, etc., and using those ritual objects every week. Joel answered that it is only the b'nai mitzvah child, and the ritual objects are being thoroughly cleaned afterwards. Joshua Eisenberg reinforced that there is not a concern, because these items are thoroughly cleaned. Lauren also said that she appreciates the Safety Committee and the efforts they are making.

- Judy asked if all the churches have installed new ventilation and ionization systems. She also asked if we could provide pre-packaged box lunches outside for Kiddush luncheons in the spring? Randy said that is a good idea and will ask the Religious Affairs Committee and Joel to consider that idea.
- Randy said that the Safety Committee has been doing an excellent job and thanks Joshua Eisenberg, Naomi Richman-Neuman, and the entire Safety Committee.

10. Good & Welfare

- Ed Simon shared that he and his wife Lori will be hosting a Zoom program on Wednesday about their many trips to National Parks. In addition, Ed shared that in late June, he and Lori will be moving to the West Coast to be closer to family.
- Nicole Soffin shared that Bob Schwartz became a grandparent again on Thursday. The new baby came about 6 weeks early, but all is well with mother and baby.
- Rabbi Schoenberg is thrilled that we found a new Rabbi! Alexandra Bar-Cohen thanked Rabbi Schoenberg for all his support during the search process.

11. Adjournment

11.1 The meeting went into Executive Session at 9:30PM.

11.2 The meeting was adjourned at 9:33PM in a motion made by Helaine Isaacs and Moshe Margolin.

11.3 The next meeting will be held on 3/20/2021.

Minutes recorded by Edye Kamenir