



General Board Meeting - June 17, 2021

Present:

Barbara Abramson (1)	Linda Grenis (2)	Avi Paradise (1)
Alexandra Bar-Cohen (2)	Diane Guvenis (1)	Lauren Neufeld (1)
Joel Berger	Samantha Hirschberg (1)	Naomi Richman-Neumann (2)
Jeremy Black (1)	Helaine Isaacs (1)	Rabbi Elliot Schoenberg
Randy Brett (2)	Edye Kamenir (2)	Sarah Schwarz (1)
Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges (2)	Judy Kutin (2*)	Tom Will (1)
Abbye Cornfield (1)	Nancy Lewis (2)	Claude Winn (1)
Martin Ettenberg (2)	Jenny Ludmer (1)	Nir Yakoby (2)
Susan Falcon (2)	Moshe Margolin (2*)	
Lew Gantwerk (2)	Joshua McCoy (1)	
	Dana Molina (1)	

Note: Numbers shown in parentheses are the number of votes each member has according to TJC By-Laws. Executive Committee Members have 2 votes, as well as Committee Chairs who do not have a Co-Chair or whose Co-Chair is not present (indicated by 2*). All Committee Co-Chairs whose Co-Chair is present have one vote each. Number subject to change based on attendance status of Committee Co-Chairs. The President has adopted the practice of not voting, except in the event of a tie.

Minutes:

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:33PM and was held via video conference.
2. Alexandra Bar-Cohen kicked off the first meeting of the new fiscal year by thanking the members of the Board for their commitment to The Jewish Center. She shared that everyone has been asked to be part of the Board because of their considerable talents, and their time devoting those talents to TJC is greatly appreciated. She added that this an exciting time to be on the Board. Quite intentionally, there are some remaining open positions on the Board, but we are seeking to ensure the right fit for those positions. She reviewed Zoom housekeeping issues. Please use the chat function as a parking lot as we would love to hear all of your thoughts, but we want to make sure we use our time together effectively and efficiently during the meeting. The goal of the meeting this evening is to get to know each other and how we will work together. We will continue that journey on the Board Retreat on 7/11/2021.
3. **D'var Torah** was delivered by Rabbi Elliott Schoenberg. Before Rabbi began his remarks, Alexandra thanked Rabbi for his contributions as TJC's interim Rabbi in this most difficult and unusual year. Rabbi Schoenberg began his remarks by saying that it has been a privilege and honor to be our Rabbi this year, and he will miss it. He spoke about Miriam and her death which was part of this week's Parshah. He posed the question: "What lessons can we learn from Miriam's death on how to live as Jews?" He invited us to compare the death of Aaron to the death of Miriam. In the Torah, Aaron's death is quite a production, but Miriam gets one line - Rabbi Schoenberg noted that the contrast is dramatic. When the Torah records Miriam's death, the line is followed by saying that the water in the well dries up. Rashi made the connection that the well that had followed the Isrealites in the desert had died. When the Torah describes

men, like Aaron and Moses, many words are used, but the mention of Miriam is brief. The important point is that she is noted for her action. She nurtured and took care of the Jewish people. It's not about what you say, it's about what you do. All three siblings - Miriam, Aaron, and Moses, die not by the angel of Death, but by a kiss from G-d. She is not remembered by her rhetoric or lengthy speeches; instead, she is remembered because she took care of the Jewish people. We only learn of this when Miriam dies - the well dried up. She was not recognized until after her death. So Rabbi Schoenberg's counsel to the Board, is that it is not about what you say or how emphatically you say it in a meeting, but it is about what you do, so we should model our behavior on our sister Miriam.

Alexandra thanked Rabbi Schoenberg for his inspiring words.

4. Approval of Minutes

- The minutes of the May 20, 2021 Board Meeting were circulated prior to the meeting for review and were approved in a motion made by Joshua McCoy and seconded by Moshe Margolin. There were 13 abstentions, since new Board members had not attended the prior month's Board meeting.
- See www.thejewishcenter.org/Resources/Board-Minutes.aspx.

5. Reflections on the Anti-Semitism Rally - Alexandra Bar-Cohen

- Alexandra invited the Board to share thoughts in the Zoom chat about this evening's Anti-Semitism Rally that was held in Hinds Plaza in Princeton. She shared that it was inspiring for her to see so many young people in attendance. She felt like she was with 'her people.' It was great to see so many people from the community, hear from so many great speakers, and very inspiring to see everyone come together. There was music..and even frosties! The signs people made were very moving. It was estimated that there were 200 people in attendance.

6. Other Updates - Alexandra Bar-Cohen

- Alexandra updated the Board on the situation with leasing the Religious School building to Acton Academy, who have asked to be released from the contract due to a change in their plans for the school year. TJC has returned the \$30K they had paid to secure the lease, less the \$6K security deposit. Joel Berger and others are actively looking for tenants.
- Nancy Lewis said that if you haven't signed up for a Meet and Greet with Rabbi Merow, please do so. There will be multiple dates throughout the summer.
- Naomi Richman-Neumann said that everyone should have received a membership commitment form for the coming year that links to ShulCloud. If you have any questions or comments, please let her, Joel or Alexandra know.
- Lew Gantwerk asked Nancy if there were any other host sites needed. She said they had enough now, but she will let him know if more are needed. After High Holidays, more Meet

and Greets will be scheduled, so Nancy anticipates that she will take Lew up on his offer to host one.

- Joel gave a shout-out to Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges as the first person to hand in the commitment form.

7. **New Board Ice-Breaker & Discussion - Alexandra Bar-Cohen and Joel Berger**

Alexandra shared her vision for TJC to be the place where "everyone knows your name." Therefore, TJC has initiated a name tag project, with the intent being that everyone wears his/her name tag at TJC events. It will help Rabbi Merow get to know everyone and will help us all get to know each other better. But that's a very literal action to take. We also intend to ensure that TJC is a warm and welcoming place. We need to create a covenantal ethos, and that begins with us on the Board. To start, Alexandra invited the Board to engage in a quick ice-breaker. Please change your screen name to your favorite Jewish Soul Food and your place of birth.

7.1 Discussion

Joel shared greetings from Miami and that he will be back in the office next week. He invited us to ponder several questions for the Board discussion: What do you want to get out of serving on the Board, and what do you want to give as you serve on the Board? What excites and what worries you about TJC as we emerge from the chrysalis period?

- Diane Guvenis shared that she is glad to be a Co-chair of the Fundraising Committee and hopes to be helpful in shoring up development opportunities for TJC. She hopes her efforts are helpful to THC's financial stability. She is excited about getting back together with people. She attended services on Saturday morning and noted how great it was to celebrate Shabbat in person with the community. She expressed her apprehension at the fact that it's been such a long time that we have been physically apart, and we have gotten so comfortable not being together, so it will take a while for people to get used to the idea of coming back together.
- Susan Falcon shared her desire to re-connect with other people she has served with in the past on the Board and to meet and learn from new people with whom she has not yet served. What she wants to give to the Board during her service are lessons she has learned in other leadership experiences. She also expressed her excitement about welcoming Rabbi Merow.
- Moshe Margolin felt worried that as a congregation we will have unrealistic expectations of our new Rabbi. He also felt excited about the fact that this is clearly a new chapter. We have the right attitude and have already demonstrated that we can meet these challenges. To be able to serve the congregation is always exciting. He spent his career as a Jewish professional, and now he is a Jewish volunteer and appreciates serving on the Board to work together toward a common goal.
- Joshua Mc Coy said that he would like to learn from others during his time serving on the Board. He would like to contribute his learning and experience in serving his prior synagogue. He looks forward to partnering with Rabbi Merow to figure out how to get other unaffiliated people to join, as well as working with and learning from everyone on the Board.
- Randy Brett shared that he enjoys being on the Board, because he has now officially come full circle from President Elect to President and now to Past President. He observes that it is

an interesting position to be in. What he looks forward to gleaning from the experience of serving in his new capacity is to see people in person that he hasn't seen in 18 months. Being part of the community physically and in person is something he has missed during the pandemic.

- Linda Grenis is excited most by being inspired by like-minded people as she serves the Board in her latest role. She has missed this dynamic and is really excited by starting this new chapter. She loves TJC and derives so much pleasure from giving and volunteering, and she hopes to develop with the committees a new and contemporary vision of Programming. She hopes to gain new friendships and to learn and grow from each Board member.
- Lauren Neufeld expressed that it is an honor to have the opportunity to serve. She is thrilled to share the opportunity to serve with her co-chair Claude Winn and to learn from her. Lauren would like to share her commitment to making TJC a kind, inclusive and welcoming community where we enjoy programming and pray together.
- Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges shared her goal to make sure that congregants of all ages feel like we're all members of the same congregation. She hopes that younger people learn the importance of faith and culture and the importance of carrying that on.
- Helaine Isaacs shared that TJC has been such an important part of her and her family's lives over the years. Serving on the Board this cycle helps her re-connect to the community after COVID. She was happy to be asked to lead Membership, as she believes there are a lot of opportunities in this area to attract new members and is excited to be working with her new Co-Chair.
- Samantha Hirschberg is excited about Rabbi Merow starting. She believes Rabbi Merow will be a great role model who will engage with families. Samantha looks forward to meeting other Board members in person rather than on Zoom and is excited to be part of the team again this year!
- Barbara Abramson is eager to get back together socially with everyone. As Co-Chair of Religious Affairs, she is responsible to the Rabbi and the congregation. She learned so much last year in her service in this role from Rabbi S, Polly Strauss, and Nancy Lewis. She wants to make TJC a place where everyone has their religious needs met, and she is looking forward to getting to know Rabbi Merow and support her in any way she can.
- Dana Molina is excited to Co-Chair the Social Action Committee and to be working with Jenny Ludmer. Social Action is a particular focus of Rabbi Merow, and Dana is eager to see her ideas. Dana is encouraged by youth participation and concerned about finding ways to keep youth active in Social Action pursuits. She is also excited for a renewed spirit of membership with Rabbi Merow coming aboard.
- Abbye Cornfield is looking forward to working with Helaine and the Membership Committee. She hopes to help bring fresh perspective to the challenges faced by the committee.
- Avi Paradise is full of enthusiasm for engaged Jewish life and thrilled to see so many allies here in that mission! He is looking forward to working with Nancy and Barbara on Religious Affairs. He has many new ideas.
- Lew Gantwerk is excited by being able to take the next step to reuniting physically as we emerge from the pandemic. He has been touched by the leadership that has kept us together during this time, noting how hard he thought it was going to be when we couldn't come to the campus. To see what we've done during this time has made him proud. One worry Lew shared was about where people are. There are 30 of us here - where are the other 600? How are they feeling about coming back, and what does coming back mean at this point? How do we get people comfortable to come back physically, but also spiritually

and emotionally? He is also excited by walking into the new sanctuary and seeing it accessible to the whole world. He wants to be able to help in any way he can - to give back to a community that has given so much to him. Lew also wants to set an example to his grandchildren on what covenantal service to the Jewish community looks like.

- Randy added in chat that it's fantastic that so many younger congregants agreed to serve on the Board!
- Nir Yakoby is excited to join the Board and help TJC in any way. He is familiar with Israeli Culture and hopes to showcase all the positive sides of Israeli culture in his role. He is excited to work with everyone. What worries him is anti-Semitism. We don't have to hide, nor do we need permission to be here. We need to teach our kids to be proud and to give them the tools to combat anti-Semitism when they face it.
- Joel thanked everyone who participated in the discussion.

8. Board Covenant - Alexandra Bar-Cohen

The proposed Board Covenant was circulated before the meeting for review. It outlines our rules of engagement, shared values, and behaviors that shape who we are. Alexandra posed several questions for reflection and discussion: How do we encourage our community to embrace a covenantal ethos? It starts with us, and we need to model this. How we feel about this? Is there anything missing?

8.1 Discussion

- Naomi Richman-Neumann added her support based on experience for #4 in the Board Covenant.
- Edey Kamenir shared support for #3. When we make decisions, we need to put TJC first, not your agenda or my agenda. This was a guiding principle when she ran the Nominating Committee last year.
- Martin Ettenberg said that we should have a teen representative on the Board. Naomi shared we had a youth representative in the past and that is something to consider going forward. Perhaps the School Committee can identify someone for that role.
- The EC has discussed having a volunteer fair to ensure that people can join whichever committees spark their interest. Our committees are not by invitation only - anyone can join.
- Randy Brett noted the importance of confidentiality in the covenant document.
- Claude Winn asked if we could add something on inclusiveness in the covenant. Alexandra said they could work together on something to that effect.
- Lauren asked if #7 could be expanded to include some other services that have lower attendance. Alexandra asked her to share revised language.
- Alexandra added that the Kehilat Community Connection Facebook page is all about in-reach, which is just as important as outreach. Lauren reminded people that if there are children in pictures anyone wants to post to social media, Sharon Diamondstein and Alexandra have to approve before posting.
- Helaine Isaacs added a point about creating the community that we want to be a part of, so it is incumbent on us to seek out the new faces, the people who are isolated, to speak to them and get to know them.

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- Dana Molina liked the notion of a buddy assigned to new members - it would be a nice way to help welcome them.
- Linda Grenis added that we as Board members are leaders and ambassadors of TJC. It is easy to complain as a congregant, but as leaders, we have the opportunity to impact change. If we see something that is not right, give the benefit of the doubt. Whisper in each others' ears and help someone become more aware and learn.
- Joshua McCoy likes the name tag idea, and our tags should say Board Member on it. We need to work the room when we are at TJC services and programs. We need to welcome everyone. Joshua asked clarifying questions around whether Friday evening services will be outside in person and whether Board meetings will be in person.
 - Samantha Hirschberg added in chat that "Ask me about TJC" can be on our name tags. Lauren built on the suggestion by adding "JCW (or committee x) asks for your participation - let's talk" on the name tags.
- Lew Gantwerk asked with regard to #11, how do we balance confidentiality with transparency in conveying messages to congregants?

9. Housekeeping and Action Steps - Alexandra Bar-Cohen

- Please sign up for a Meet and Greet with Rabbi Merow
- Please come and thank Rabbi Schoenberg for his service at his Farewell Shabbat
- Unwind the Week + Cocktails in the Courtyard - June 25 and will be the last Friday of every month
- Zamru Style Shabbat this Friday night
- Join Kehilat Community Connection on Facebook and follow our other social media outlets
- Rabbi Merow will join us for our Board Retreat on Sunday, 7/11 - please don't miss it

10. Adjournment

10.1 The meeting went into Executive Session at 8:50PM

15.2 The meeting was adjourned at 9:25PM in a motion made by Lew Gantwerk and seconded by Nir Yakoby.

Minutes recorded by Edye Kamenir