



General Board Meeting - August 19, 2021

Present:

Barbara Abramson (1)	Linda Grenis (2)	Avi Paradise (1)
Shari Allen (2*)	David Greenberg (2)	Fredi Perlmutter (1)
Alexandra Bar-Cohen (2)	Diane Guvenis (1)	Lauren Neufeld (1)
Randy Brett (2)	Samantha Hirschberg (1)	Naomi Richman-Neumann (2)
Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges (2)	Helaine Isaacs (2*)	Rabbi Andrea Merow
Dane Dickler (2)	Edye Kamenir (2)	Sarah Schwarz (1)
Josh Eisenberg (?)	Judy Kutin (2*)	Tom Will (1)
Martin Ettenberg (2)	Nancy Lewis (2)	Claude Winn (1)
Susan Falcon (2)	Moshe Margolin (1)	Nir Yakoby (2)
	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 7:04PM and was held via video conference.
2. Alexandra Bar-Cohen welcomed everyone to the Board meeting and invited Rabbi Andrea Merow to give the D'var Torah.
3. **D'var Torah** was delivered by Rabbi Merow, who spoke about the upcoming High Holidays. Rabbi Merow shared that people in the Jewish world are scrambling trying to figure out how to deal with the latest challenges of COVID and what it means for High Holiday planning for this year. We need to remind ourselves that our goal for the holidays is to create a sacred community - *kehilat kedushah*. We need to remind people they can be part of our sacred community in whatever capacity they feel comfortable. Another value we need to remind ourselves of is *pekuah nefesh*, and we usually think about that concept in terms of physical health, but we also need to think about it in terms of people's spiritual and mental health, too. So it's a balancing act. That's what we are trying to do this year here at TJC - we are balancing the needs of coming together with the need of keeping each person in the sacred community safe. One of the needs of our community is to help people feel good during a difficult time. No one wanted to be here right now. Everyone wanted to be done with the pandemic. In spite of where we are now in the trajectory of the pandemic, we at TJC seek to create as joyful a celebration as possible. A sacred community means one that cares for the souls and health of everyone in the *kehilat kedushah* - our sacred community. Rabbi Merow wished the entire Board an introspective and wonderful new year - whether we choose to spend it at home or in the sanctuary. A year in which we have *kavanah* and intention to become the best Jews we can be in the coming year.

Alexandra thanked Rabbi Merow for her inspiring D'var Torah.

4. **Thoughts for the High Holidays - Alexandra Bar-Cohen**

- Alexandra shared her thoughts for the upcoming High Holidays, and the theme of returning home to The Jewish Center. She shared that lay leadership plays an important role in the ingathering of our digital exiles. Each Board member comes from different cohorts, but we all intersect here as our *kehilah*. She asked Board Members two things at this time: 1) to take this message of community and spread it among your cohorts to allow the message to live in word and deed in order to get people back in person or virtually; and 2) to please send out positive vibes and support our clergy and staff as we approach the very demanding season of the High Holidays.

5. **Approval of Minutes**

- The minutes of the June 17, 2021 Board Meeting were circulated prior to the meeting for review and were approved unanimously in a motion made by Moshe Margolin and seconded by Randy Brett. There was 1 abstention, since a new Board member had not attended the prior month's Board meeting.
- See www.thejewishcenter.org/Resources/Board-Minutes.aspx.

5. **Consent Agenda (Committee Reports) - Alexandra Bar-Cohen**

- Alexandra asked if there were any questions or comments on the Committee Reports that were circulated prior to the meeting.
- Judy Kutin asked that Safety Committee Report be excluded from the Consent Agenda in order to raise questions about the report.
- Judy asked for clarification on why food is not permitted outdoors, especially since indoor and outdoor dining is legal in Princeton, and children would like to be fed when attending Religious School and other events. She asked if it would be possible for everyone to be able to have food outside, regardless of age or vaccination status. Josh Eisenberg said that the last conversation the Health and Safety Committee had determined that children would be permitted to eat outdoors, regardless of age or vaccination status. Judy asked whether the Committee report could be amended to reflect that decision. Naomi Richman-Neuman said it would be clarified. Alexandra said that a special communication to Religious School families from the Religious Affairs Committee would be forthcoming specifically outlining the procedures for the High Holidays. Judy wanted to clarify that children and adults can eat outdoors. Alexandra said that Sharon Diamondstein would communicate that point to the Religious School families. Rabbi Merow said that individually packaged food would be offered to be more hygienic. Judy objected to individual packs. Alexandra said that the main point is that we have found a safe way for children to eat.
- Judy then asked for clarification around whether unvaccinated people would NOT be allowed in the building for High Holidays ONLY, and not for other times like Shabbat. Josh said that's true for now, but they may not be true for a long period of time given the fluidity of the pandemic. Judy wanted to make sure that people celebrating simchat will be able to

have unvaccinated people attend, specifically unvaccinated siblings or elderly family members. Alexandra thanked Judy for providing more detail as to the provenance of the concern, and she said that we will have services as long as possible outside. Judy said that if it rains, we don't want to exclude younger siblings because they aren't vaccinated.

- Nir Yakoby asked for the reasoning around why unvaccinated people are not allowed in the building. Josh explained that because we relaxed the social distancing requirements to let more people into the sanctuary for the High Holidays, the virus can more easily spread. We are also allowing people to sing, so we are trying to decrease the chance that the virus will be brought into the building by restricting access to vaccinated people only during the High Holidays. Nir said that people who are vaccinated can also carry the virus. Josh acknowledged that point appears to be true, and the data on that topic change on a daily basis. COVID cases are up, with vaccine rates declining, while vaccine efficacy is also dropping, so every type of organization has had to retreat back from some of their progress on returning to normal. Nursing homes will likely be required to limit visitors again. The Delta variant should cause concern, and we need to be cautious for our community as we open up and allow people to be in a confined space and not create a super-spreader event. We are trying to do the best we can with the data we have. The Health & Safety Committee met 10 days ago and has another meeting coming up to update the policy and ensure that it reflects the current situation.
- Alexandra thanked the Committee for their nimbleness.
- Judy added ideas in chat regarding the use of rapid COVID tests and whether TJC would require proof of vaccination.

6. Finance Report - Dane Dickler

- Dane share the highlights of the July Dashboard: dues collection is strong year to date. So far since the start of the new fiscal year, \$70K more was collected this year versus that same time last year. This increase was attributes to 1) congregants' eagerness to getting back to shul; 2) kudos to Joel Berger and the administrative staff for getting all the membership packages out by 7/31, since last year, it lagged into August; and 3) the holidays are earlier this year, so people are making payments earlier to ensure they can get their tickets.
- Expenses are in line with expectations and within budget. Our restricted funds reflect expenditures related to the Bimah Accessibility project.
- Membership numbers also look strong. Household memberships are up by 6 families, because six Senior Couples opted to pay Full Household dues. For Senior Households, we offered the option to select out of the increased dues, and, so far, only about 1/3 elected out of the increased dues. We had budgeted for 1/2, so that is favorable to the budget.
- Moving on to the balance sheet, we are in a strong cash position. The first draw Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan was forgiven in full for \$156K by the Small Business Administration (SBA). The second draw PPP loan of \$170K is in the process of applying for forgiveness with the goal of being finished with the application within the next few weeks. In addition, we plan to apply for the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) - another government program.
- Susan Falcon asked about Religious School enrollment numbers. Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges said that topic will be covered later in the meeting.

7. **Good and Welfare - Alexandra Bar-Cohen**

Alexandra shared with the Board that she would like to prioritize Good and Welfare in order to highlight the covenantal ethos we are creating and to deepen our connections with one another. She invited Board members to please share one thing that you are excited about in the coming weeks and months at TJC:

- Helaine Isaacs is looking forward to Sunday morning 10/3, which will be the day of the JFCS Bike Ride fundraiser. She hopes the TJC has a good showing at that ride, and there is a TJC team if anyone would like to join.
- Randy Brett likened his new role as Past President to an appendix. He joked that he once served a purpose, but that purpose is unclear now. He was happy to report that the Bimah project is on track and will be done no later than 9/2, right before the first bat mitzvah of the season. Alexandra assured Randy that he is nothing like an appendix, and the Bimah project is just one of the many ways he serves an important purpose!
- Naomi Richman-Neuman said that last fall, TJC held an outdoor shofar event that was the first time many people came back to shul. She is happy to report that we will do an outdoor shofar blowing again this year after the first day of Religious School on Sunday 9/12.
- Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges is excited for High Holidays services outside in the tent for young families and Religious School families. It is reminiscent of her first High Holiday experience at TJC in the tent, and she missed it. Alexandra said that she wants to make sure that people attending the tent services know that the clergy will be coming out to the tent, and there will be the opportunity for them to interact with the clergy.
- Dana Molina shared that for Social Action, we support many different programs. As Helaine mentioned, you can join the JFCS TJC bike team online. Social Action also supports HomeFront, and they are sponsoring a Bike, Run, Walk on 10/31. Princeton Community Housing also has a Raise the Rent fundraiser in October. If anyone has projects of interest and want to have TJC involvement, please let her know.
- Lew Gantwerk is looking forward to being in shul when the first person who is mobility-challenged gets to go to the Torah on our newly accessible Bimah. That will be a joyous occasion!
- Linda Grenis is excited to be back at TJC after the hiatus and to be connecting with so many like-minded people. She is working hard to keep what is beautiful about our programming traditions, while also being mindful of how to make programming more contemporary and to broaden our appeal to engage more of our congregants. All of our committees are trying to be mindful of that as they plan for future programs. She is also looking forward to our Rabbi Adam Feldman z"l memorial activities, which will be discussed later in the agenda.
- Alexandra was pleased that people shared a broad range of personal and programmatic reflections, and she is looking forward to more people inspired by our community to 'pay it forward.'

8. **Fundraising - Diane Guvenis**

- Alexandra shared with the Board that Joshua McCoy recently resigned as Co-Chair of Fundraising, as he moved to FL.
- Alexandra encourages 100% Board participation in the Annual Fund.
- Diane shared an overview of the plans for the Fundraising Committee this year. First, she is working on creating/staffing the committee. The first fundraising effort of the year is the

Annual Fund. Launch communication has gone out, and there will be a follow-up mailing and a phone call drive. On 8/24, volunteers are invited to Alexandra's house to make calls for the Annual Fund. Names, phone numbers, and scripts will be provided to make calls to congregants. The Annual Fund will be closing on 12/31 this year, which is earlier than usual so as not to overlap with the Rabbi Merow installation and associated fundraising efforts.

- For Rabbi Merow's installation in March, there will be a number of Fundraising opportunities. Some ideas that have been shared include having a dinner/party, ticket sales, and an ad journal.
- Another fundraising opportunity is the tribute funds, and Diane wants to work on expanding the culture of giving. She thanks Judy Kutin for her past work on understanding the tribute funds and hopes to re-launch them to encourage more giving. We also want to continue to encourage Life and Legacy giving.
- Alexandra added that if anyone would like to join the Annual Fund call event on the evening of 8/24, there will be wine and refreshments for those who call. She shared that she has never felt comfortable cold calling and selling things. But she shared that if you really believe in something, it's not so hard to make those calls. If you are willing to make calls, we'd really love to have you. Diane said she would send the script out to everyone to get comfortable with it.

9. Rabbi Adam Feldman z"l Memorial Update - Alexandra Bar-Cohen and Lauren Neufeld

- Alexandra shared that there is a Committee headed by Michael Feldstein and Josh Zinder that are working toward a comprehensive plan to memorialize Rabbi Feldman z"l, and we will hear more about those plans in the coming months. What we are discussing tonight is really about his role in the greater local community and will allow those ties to be honored, as well.
- Lauren Neufeld has headed an effort to honor the community impact Rabbi Feldman z"l had, inclusive of his ties to local interfaith clergy, the Princeton Public Schools, and the Princeton Police Department. The idea is that a Princeton Elm tree would be planted in his memory in a local park, Farmview Fields. Alexandra noted the symbolism of a tree with the roots he created in the community.
- The request is for the Board to approve the use of \$1000 from restricted funds to purchase the tree in Rabbi Feldman's z"l name.
- Barbara Abramson made a motion to approve the use of \$1000 from restricted funds to purchase the tree in Rabbi Feldman's z"l name, which was seconded by Diane Guvenis.
- Lew Gantwerk thought that it was such a terrific, out-of-the-box idea, and a great way to memorialize Rabbi Feldman z"l. The idea is both thoughtful and clever.
- Alexandra said that someone had talked to Sara and the children about the idea.
- Nir Yakoby asked about the location at Farmview Fields. He mentioned that the park is a protected area. Lauren said the Princeton municipality has its own arborist who is in charge of this program and was consulted on this particular effort, and it made sense to go with a Princeton Elm. There are only a few parks in Princeton that could accommodate that type of tree. The arborist said that he does not anticipate there ever being a need to move the tree. Community Park was not an option, because it may be undergoing renovation in the future, which may necessitate moving the tree. Farmview does not have that issue.
- Alexandra added that this effort is just one part of a larger, more comprehensive way of honoring Rabbi Feldman z"l in the future.

- The motion was called to vote and was carried unanimously.

10. High Holiday Update - Rabbi Andrea Merow and Nancy Lewis

- Rabbi Merow thanked everyone for all their hard work in designing a comprehensive and thoughtful High Holiday offering . She provided an overview of all of the service options and their locations from Selichot to the end of Yom Kippur. She also provided clarification around clergy attendance at the Family Services in the tent, in that she and Cantor Warschauer would be in attendance at the 9AM Family Services on Rosh Hashanah Day 1 and Yom Kippur, while Shacharit would be led by congregants in the Sanctuary. She and Cantor Warschauer would join the service in the Main Sanctuary at the start of the Torah Service.
- Rabbi Merow shared plans for the Riverside Service to be held in the Beit Midrash this year, since Princeton Public Schools planned to limit access to the Riverside facility as a pandemic precaution, and the Religious Affairs Committee thought it was a good idea to have all congregants on TJC's campus this year to welcome everyone back.
- Torah readings have been assigned. Honors will go out next week. There will be many fewer ark openings to minimize the number of people going up to the Bimah in the Sanctuary. All services will be on Zoom as well, so the Committee requests volunteers to be Zoom ushers.
- Rabbi Merow also outlined her plans for the addition of several alternative style services. On Rosh Hashanah Day 1 at 4:15, Rabbi Merow will lead an alternative spiritual experience with chanting, praying and musical accompaniment that will last approx 50 min. It will be followed at 5:30 by Tashlich will be at Carnegie Lake. Given that unvaccinated people, including children, are not allowed into the TJC building during the High Holidays, there has been a concerted effort to invite families to everything we can, and make it as special as they can. We are sending special invitations to families with children. There is also do a plan to do a 5PM event before Tashlich for young children. Maariv will follow at the lake.
- Naomi Richman-Neuman asked if people who do not have children want to attend, are they allowed? Rabbi Merow said that as long as there is space, they can. Lauren Neufeld asked if outdoor services will be available virtually. Rabbi Merow said that would be our intent, but details need to be worked out. Randy Brett added that we don't have the capability of doing LiveStream outside the building. Rabbi Merow said that we can do Zoom or Facebook Live outside/off campus and elaborated that the mandate from the Religious Affairs Committee was that the services should be more like 2019 vs. 2020, so the production quality will not be the same as last year.
- In addition, there will be a Tot Service and an outdoor teen experience. On Rosh Hashanah Day 2, there will be no Riverside service. For Kol Nidre, there will be one service with a musical interlude preceding the chanting of Kol Nidre. Kol Nidre will be chanted by Cantor Jeff, Barbara Gantwerk, and Lisa Jacknow. Alexandra and Rabbi Merow will speak that evening. Yom Kippur morning services will model the approach designed for Rosh Hashanah Day 1. There will be a Yom Kippur Forum discussion by Rabbi Baird hopefully outside in the tent in the afternoon. Rabbi Merow will then lead a contemplative Yizchor and Healing service at 4:15, followed by Minchah. Neilah and Shofar blowing will be outside to end the fast.
- Nancy added that ushers are still needed, and Rabbi Merow said they are also looking for Sukkah builders on the Sunday between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

- Rabbi Merow said that she is teaching a class about the High Holiday prayerbook on 8/24, and Bob LeBeau will teach a class on the following Tuesday in preparation for the holidays.
- Alexandra and Nancy thanked the Committee for all of their hard work.
- Nancy reminded everyone that we will also do a food drive on Yom Kippur to benefit JFCS and Arm in Arm as we have in the past.

11. Religious School Update - Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges

- Gabrielle shared that we typically have a number of families that register for Religious School in September. That being said, the registration numbers look strong so far as we stand in mid-August. The total for 2020-21 was 112 enrolled students, and we currently have 86 enrolled students, but we lost a large Zayin class. The impact of the nursery school closing is being felt, as the youngest graduates of the Nursery School are now entering 5th grade. Classes younger than 5th grade are notably smaller. Sulam enrollment is 25 last year and 27 so far this year. Edye Kamenir asked if we know why Sulam is delivering such strong numbers this year. Gabrielle said that Sulam is now required in order for a student to be part of the madrichim program.
- Gabrielle provided an overview of the Religious School Back to School plans with the overarching goal of getting kids back in person to re-establish connections that were lost last year due to COVID. Older kids were mostly on Zoom all year. We are bringing back all grades outside and will follow the Safety Committee guidance. Everyone will be together on Sunday, and 3rd-7th graders will have the option to attend their mid-week class on either Tuesday or Wednesday. Tuesday will be entirely virtual, which is new this year. Inclement weather will drive classes inside with social distancing and a Zoom option. Madrichim will be in charge of Zoom, so the Religious School teachers can focus on the class.
- Sharon Diamondstein has asked around to see what other area Religious Schools are doing. Most other area schools are not starting until October, taking a 'wait and see' approach, but we wanted to start sooner, especially while the weather is nicer outside.
- Alexandra thanked Gabrielle, and said that we have heard many families have concerns about safety and comfort. If there are any people that have concerns, please send them to Alexandra or Joel, and we will continue to pivot as needed.
- Rabbi Merow added that we are fortunate to have Sharon Diamondstein, who is wonderful, and Ethan Weg, who hosted a carnival earlier this week that was attended by 30 children. She also wanted to thank Nancy for taking her to all of the meet and greets, as well as Randy and Alexandra for all of their support throughout the process.

12. Old Business

- Alexandra shared that the Board Covenant is now complete and is available in the Electronic Binder. It is a living document, and we can re-visit it as needed.

13. New Business

- Ushers, Safety Monitors, and Greeters are still needed for the High Holidays. Please sign up!
- Helaine Isaacs shared that the Membership Committee is seeking to match new members with congregants as sponsors. The agreement would be that the sponsor would commit to bringing the new member to programs to introduce him/her to people. So far three very enthusiastic people have stepped up. We need about 15 volunteers for this effort. Please

pay it forward to help people feel welcome. Also, we plan to call all of our congregants to wish people well during High Holidays. The Chavurah Chesed Committee will call all congregants over the age of 80, but we need volunteers to cover the rest of the congregation. We need to set this up quickly, so we need people to volunteer. Alexandra said that making calls was one of the best things she did last year. Lauren Neufeld added the same point and said that congregants are so appreciative. She wonders if it would make sense for people to call the same people to develop continuity. Alexandra said that she would leave to Naomi Richman-Neuman to decide if that is feasible.

- Alexandra encouraged everyone to come to 'Unwind the Week' to be led by Rabbi Merow and 'Cocktails in the Courtyard' next Friday.
- Nancy Lewis urged people to sign up to be gift presenters for B'nai Mitzvah. We have a script to follow and a bag of goodies to present. Edye Kamenir asked if you have to attend in person. Alexandra said she would follow-up with Joel. Barbara Abramson asked how many b'nai mitzvah we have this year. Nancy said we have 26 students.
- Alexandra urged people to work on the new Nature Trail being led by Shira Kutin.

14. Adjournment

14.1 The meeting went into Executive Session at 8:55PM

14.2 The meeting was adjourned at 9:02PM in a motion made by Randy Brett and seconded by Moshe Margolin.

Minutes recorded by Edye Kamenir