



General Board Meeting - October 21, 2021

Present:

Barbara Abramson (1)	Lew Gantwerk (2)	Lauren Neufeld (1)
Shari Allen (2*)	David Greenberg (2)	Naomi Richman-Neumann (2)
Alexandra Bar-Cohen (2)	Samantha Hirschberg (1)	Sarah Schwarz (1)
Randy Brett (2)	Helaine Isaacs (1)	Jesse Treu (1)
Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges (2)	Edye Kamenir (2)	Tom Will (2*)
Abbye Cornfield (1)	Judy Kutin (1)	Claude Winn (1)
Dane Dickler (2)	Jenny Ludmer (2*)	Nir Yakoby (2*)
Martin Ettenberg (2*)	Moshe Margolin (1)	
Susan Falcon (2)	Rabbi Andrea Merow	
	Avi Paradise (1)	

Congregants: Bret Jacknow

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 7:02PM and was held via video conference.
2. **President's Welcome** - Alexandra Bar-Cohen welcomed everyone to the Board meeting. She opened with a question to the Board: "What does it mean to be an ambassador for TJC in our Board Covenant?" We have our elevator pitch that we practiced and honed at our summer Board retreat. She asked us to expand that definition of ambassador to include social media. She asked that if Board Members are on social media, to please follow our main Facebook page focused on outreach and in-reach. She highlighted that we also have social media pages for TJC Families and the TJC Religious School. We also have Kehilat Community Connection private Facebook group meant to foster interactions among our members. Our role as Board Members and ambassadors goes well beyond "liking" - please also share, post about events, and tag people involved. These forms of engagement have an exponential impact. We are taking a multi-platform approach. Please contact Alexandra or Rabbi Merow, who is a social media maven in her own right, after the meeting if you have any questions.
3. **D'var Torah** was delivered by Avi Paradise, who spoke about the Akedah. Avraham was going about his everyday life when G-d called out to him and tested him. He answered "*Hineni*" - I'm here, I'm listening, I've opened my heart. He related those *Hineni* moments to service to our community. In addition, Avi spoke about righteous hospitality to the stranger and challenged the Board to ask ourselves how can that value inform our role as Board Members

here at TJC? He invited us to challenge ourselves to do what is righteous and just for our community.

Alexandra thanked Avi for his deep and insightful D'var Torah.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

- The minutes of the September 23, 2021, Board Meeting were circulated prior to the meeting for review. Lew Gantwerk and Samantha Hirschberg noted that they each had been present at the meeting and should be added to the attendee list. Lauren Neufeld had added clarity around a point she had made in the meeting. With those suggested amendments, the minutes were approved unanimously in a motion made by Moshe Margolin and seconded by Naomi Richman-Neumann with one abstention.
- See www.thejewishcenter.org/Resources/Board-Minutes.aspx.

5. **Finance Report - Dane Dickler**

- Dane reported that dues are coming in at a brisk pace with \$617K collected through end of September vs. budgeted goal of \$530K. He sees the collection pace as a sign of success in bringing people back to the community post-pandemic and to welcome our wonderful new Rabbi.
- Capital assessment revenues are down, but that decrease reflects the option families were earlier this year to have a moratorium on that portion of the dues to ease the financial burden in that life stage with having to pay Religious School tuition, particularly in light of the pandemic.
- Operating expenses are tracking close to budget.
- Educational revenue is back up due to increased Religious School enrollment versus last year. This year, there are currently 150 students enrolled versus 134 students last year, which was a particularly lean enrollment year given the impact of the pandemic. Every class has increased in size this year except for one. A key highlight is that 38 students are participating in our Sulam program versus only 24 last year, which is a testament to Sharon's efforts to engage this particular group of students. Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges added to chat that enrollment is actually up to 160, but we are waiting for ten to pay their tuition.
- The Annual Fund is coming in fairly well so far. Alexandra has been doing a ton of outreach. So far, many people have increased their contribution versus last year. At this point, we have raised \$133K versus \$41K this time last year.
- The total cost of the Bimah project came in at a level less than we raised.
- Income YTD is \$570K versus budget of \$466K. We have added 17 new members and currently have 14 exploratory families versus our usual level of around 5-10 exploratory families, so that bodes well for next year if we are able to convert those exploratory members to full membership.
- The balance sheet shows that we have \$1.8MM in cash. Our endowment fund is also doing well.
- Susan Falcon provided an update on the Annual Fund. The numbers she provided are from two days prior, and we have since learned of additional contributions. Based on those numbers, we are at \$133K from 96 donors to date.

- Last year, donors who give \$900 or above accounted for 85% of the total we raised. We have to keep focus on those larger donors to make sure they continue to give.
- Many people have increased their donation, but we still need to broaden the reach of our membership base to participate at any level. Last year, 37% of our membership participated. We're not at even half of that level right now. Getting our participation numbers up are important to getting to our goal. There will be another reminder for end of year giving at any level that is comfortable.
- Alexandra added that there are 4 people left on the Board who need to give. If you haven't made your Annual Fund contribution yet, please write a pledge to Joel. She also thanked the many people who volunteered to make calls. Unfortunately, our Annual Fund Chair resigned, but we have amazing Board members who are stepping up to make calls to fill in the gap. Please let Alexandra know if you are able to make calls - there is a script, and we'll give you names. She will send a letter out to the congregants, so please forward to your friends. She also received really good feedback that families were hit with the Religious School bill and the quarterly dues payment at the same time, so we need to be sensitive on timing of our Annual Fund ask. But make sure that we emphasize that it's not the number; it's the participation in a way that's meaningful.

6. Safety & Security Report - Naomi Richman-Neumann

- We have had quite a few inquiries about returning to having food indoors. Therefore, the Safety Committee came up with proposed guidelines to have food indoors while keeping the community safe circulated to Board members prior to the meeting for review. We have also had inquiries about holding parties, and we have come up with a proposal with certain kinds of parties, but dance parties can only be outdoors.
- Lew Gantwerk asked when the first Kiddush will be. Naomi isn't sure yet, but she will follow-up with Joel Berger and Nancy Lewis to confirm.
- Shari Allen asked whether these guidelines will allow typical Kiddush lunches or just the Kiddush luncheons associated with b'nai mitzvah celebrations? Naomi said that she was not sure, and that would be the purview of the Religious Affairs Committee. Shari added that we should figure cost into the budget, since paid servers will drive higher costs.
- Judi Kutin asked why would certain restrictions be imposed for a private event? If private people would like to rent the Social Hall for a non-TJC sponsored event, why would we impose restrictions on that if they are willing to assume the risks of gathering? Naomi said that we have had one set of rules in our building for everybody throughout the pandemic. We take a certain responsibility for safety and health for all people who walk through our doors. Judi asked if we would be open to people signing a waiver or taking a rapid test? She used dancing as an example - if a private event wanted to have dancing, and everyone agreed, could that happen, even if the rules state that dancing as part of TJC-sponsored events could only occur outside? Naomi said she would bring it back to the Committee for consideration.
- Alexandra added that we have a wonderful record of no COVID cases spread at TJC due to the thoughtful and intentional guidelines the Safety Committee has put into place since the onset of the pandemic. At the same time, we want to remain in constant conversation regarding our guidelines. We are constantly evaluating what other synagogues are doing, and we are open to suggestions and slowly working toward progress.

- Nir Yakoby raised the point that if a family wants to have a private event, we should consider that they will have the event elsewhere, regardless of what our rules are, so if they are willing to assume that risk, they will do so whether our facility allows it or not. It would be a shame to have that party go to another venue. We could put other measures into place to mitigate liability.
- Alexandra asked what our goal is - is it no spread of COVID in the building? She added that we have staff in the building, even when there is a private party, so we have to protect them, too. So it's an evolving conversation, and thank you to all involved in this process.
- Jesse Treu added to the Zoom chat that he agrees that it's our safety reputation at stake - no one is going to drill down to discover whether it was "our" party or a "private" party where an outbreak may have occurred. Randy Brett agreed in chat with Jesse's point.

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

- Alexandra invited us to share our *Hineni* moments within the TJC community: when we were called to step up our game in service to TJC.
- Moshe Margolin said that he and his wife volunteered to host a Meet and Greet for Rabbi Merow over the summer. It was the first time they had hosted a TJC gathering in which they did not know people attending in advance. They were thrilled to have the opportunity to host the event, and it was so nice for them to meet people they didn't already know!
- Susan Falcon shared that she wanted to feel more connected to TJC, so that's why she came back to serve on the Board and the EC. Everything she has learned about how far TJC has come during her hiatus is inspiring. She is happy to be back serving the community and making those connections again.
- Barbara Abramson said that since she has become Co-Chair of the Religious Affairs Committee, she has tried to answer the call to show up to the weekday minyanim.
- Helaine Isaacs said that serving as Co-chair of Membership has given her the opportunity to call new and prospective members, and it's such a wonderful thing to welcome people to our congregation. It's a way to pay it forward. People are so happy to share how they got here. She is starting a new program to allow veteran families to sponsor new families, so please let her know if you can bring the sponsored family to 3 events throughout the year so the new members don't have to go alone.
- Shari Allen was happy to report that she made her first Annual Fund donation this year under her own membership rather than her parents' membership.
- Naomi Richman-Neumann shared that both through the EC and Board, she has had the opportunity to meet congregants of different ages that she would not have otherwise met. Hearing those different perspectives has been invaluable to her.

8. **Adjournment**

8.1 The meeting went into Executive Session at 7:58 PM.

8.2 The meeting was adjourned at 8:26PM in a motion that with regret was not recorded.

Minutes recorded by Edye Kamenir