



## General Board Meeting - December 16, 2021

### Present:

Barbara Abramson (1)	Susan Falcon (2)	Dana Molina (1)
Shari Allen (2*)	Lew Gantwerk (2)	Avi Paradise (1)
Brad Bailey (1)	David Greenberg (2)	Lauren Neufeld (1)
Alexandra Bar-Cohen (2)	Linda Grenis (2)	Naomi Richman-Neumann (2)
Joel Berger	Samantha Hirschberg (1)	Adam Scheer (2)
Jeremy Black (1)	Helaine Isaacs (1)	Sarah Schwarz (1)
Randy Brett (2)	Edye Kamenir (2)	Jesse Treu (1)
Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges (2)	Judy Kutin (1)	Claude Winn (1)
Abbye Cornfield (1)	N. Lewis (2)	
Martin Ettenberg (2*)	Jenny Ludmer (1)	
	Rabbi Andrea Merow	

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 7:00PM and was held via video conference.
2. **President's Welcome** - Alexandra Bar-Cohen thanked everyone who presented at Sunday's Mid-year Congregational Meeting for their meaningful contributions. She noted that we are at the halfway point of our fiscal year, and we hope to see the fruition of the initiatives we have been planning during the first half of this year, including welcoming, integrating and celebrating our new Rabbi, rolling out our solar energy plan, and introducing part two of the new dues structure. So now is an appropriate time to pause and reflect to allow us to focus on what has been working and what we can do better. We have time dedicated to that purpose later this evening.
3. The **D'var Torah** was delivered by David Greenberg, who spoke of Vayechi - the end of Genesis. He recounted the story of Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons Ephraim and Menashe and how their blessings were switched. Through the present day, this very blessing is the blessing that parents give their children. It also is the first time in the Torah that we see a grandparent bless grandchildren. Perhaps we can introduce the custom in our community to have grandparents bless their grandchildren over Zoom on a weekly basis. One of the central themes of Genesis is sibling rivalry, which is central to the story of redemption. If brothers can't get along, how can nations? Jacob concludes by asking to be buried with his forefathers in Cana'an. They wrapped and buried him as if he were an Egyptian. There was a dedicated shiva and a procession of Egyptian dignitaries. So how are we doing with deaths in our congregation? Are we doing enough to support bereaved families, or is COVID keeping people from being able to show their respect? How can we show our membership that we

support them during their shiva needs? David suggested that perhaps we should have a Board member attend Zoom shiva minyanim and/or send condolence cards to the families from the Board.

Alexandra thanked David for his thought-provoking D'var and appreciated his multitude of ideas on how we can support all of our cohorts from younger to older. She took notes and will reflect on other things we can do.

#### **4. Consent Agenda**

- The minutes of the November 21, 2021, Board Meeting and the Finance Report were circulated prior to the meeting for review and were approved as circulated as part of the consent agenda in a motion made by Naomi Richman-Neumann and seconded by Lew Gantwerk. The motion passed unanimously with two abstentions.
- See [www.thejewishcenter.org/Resources/Board-Minutes.aspx](http://www.thejewishcenter.org/Resources/Board-Minutes.aspx).

#### **5. Exploratory Trail Restricted Fund - Judy Kutin and Randy Brett**

- Last spring, Alexandra tasked Religious School student Shira Kutin, who has interest and experience in landscape design, to design an Exploratory Nature Trail on the wooded area of the TJC lot. Since then, great progress has been made in bringing that vision to life. We even have two families working on trail as their Chesed project, and we had kids volunteering to work on the trail every Sunday until we went indoors for Religious School classes. Congregant Jerry Seid donated plants for the trail and the services of his personal horticulturalist. One never knows when a particular passion project may touch someone, as Jerry read about the trail in the monthly TJC newsletter, sparking renewed involvement in TJC! We hope to start the project up again in the spring and have many opportunities to enjoy the trail.
- Randy presented the proposal for the restricted fund to support the trail, which had been circulated for review prior to the meeting.
- The floor was opened to questions. Two questions were raised that the Recording Secretary regrettably missed due to an emergency phone call that she had to take.
- Susan Falcon asked a general question about restricted funds: at whose discretion can these funds be invested? She then asked for clarification around the reference to allocation of funds from the annual budget outlined in the proposal. Randy answered the first part by saying that the restriction is on the use of the funds, not how they are invested. Then he said that it was a "may" clause around the reference to investment in the proposal - not a requirement. Susan asked if the donor can require that funds be invested, and Randy said that that's totally up to the Board. The reason the Board needs to vote is because the Board is accepting the restrictions on the funding.
- David Greenberg raised questions about the permanency of the trail itself and other alternative uses for the property in the future. What if we need to expand our parking lot? Are we saying that we can't do anything with the nature trail in that spot going forward? By accepting the proposal around the funding, are we also thereby restricting our use of the land in the future? Randy said that's a good point - we currently have a waiver/exemption from the municipality for the amount of parking on-site, and we might need more parking in the future in order to be in compliance with municipal requirements. Randy explained that

in that case, the out-clause in the resolution would be used. If the funds are no longer in use for the designated purpose, the funds go back to TJC, which is outlined in the resolution. David raised the point that changing the use of that space in the future may make people who have poured their heart and finances into that endeavor upset. Jesse Treu said that it's a good point, but we should ask Randy to add a point to the proposal about not tying our hands on the use of the land. Randy said that the point is already partially outlined in point 7, but any time we have a restricted gift, we run into this issue. Jesse reviewed the language outlined in point 7 and believes that it already adequately addresses the concern he raised.

- Barbara Abramson asked if there is any way to just " earmark " the funds, rather than have the funds be specifically in a restricted fund, in order to allow for more flexibility. Randy said that anyone can donate to any fund we have. However, the families involved in this project want to have the funds dedicated to this purpose and no other. Therefore, the Board would need to accept the gift and agree to the designated purposes outlined in the proposed resolution.
- Naomi Richman-Neumann commented that we have a large number of dedicated funds, and they seem to live forever. Speaking from her experience of sorting through many of these historical funds, one needs to look into the recesses of the past to understand what the intent of these funds were in the first place. But we might want to think about putting a sunset on some of these funds. Randy agreed with that idea. Judy spent a lot of time going through all of our restricted funds to figure out if they were still useful, but they weren't historically documented that well. Randy intentionally documented the history and provenance of this particular fund to address that future need. When we have idle funds, the decision comes back to the Board to understand what to do with those funds. We did clean up a number of those funds in the past. Judy said she and Randy would go through the funds every decade or so to ensure various restricted funds are still relevant.
- Randy Brett made the motion to accept the resolution, which was seconded by Jesse Treu. The motion passed with 35 votes for and 2 against.

#### **6. Annual Performance Reviews for TJC Staff Policy - Naomi Richman-Neumann**

- A policy proposal for conducting annual performance reviews on TJC staff members was circulated to the Board for review prior to the meeting.
- A motion was made by Randy Brett and seconded by Helaine Isaacs to accept the proposal.
- Naomi provided the background and context of the policy and the need for it. It is a practice in most organizations to have a conversation around review of performance on an annual basis. That practice has been inconsistent at TJC. So this policy codifies that each staff person will have a performance review once per year. The review process for contract employees (e.g. Rabbi, Cantor) is outlined in their individual contracts, but for non-contract employees (most of the remainder of TJC's staff), such a policy is required. The policy sets a timeframe for December/January to conduct performance reviews, which is halfway through the school year, allowing time for any opportunity areas to be addressed midway through the school year, rather than waiting until the end of the school year when improvements would be unable to impact the students. This point is of particular relevance, because a large proportion of TJC's employees are educators.
- Helaine applauded the team's effort and said it is great that we are doing this. She asked if some staff people report both to other staff members and to lay leaders? Is there an organizational chart so people clearly know who reports to whom? Naomi answered that

senior staff members report to lay leaders, and other staff members report to another senior staff person, but also work closely with lay leaders. Alexandra shared the organizational chart from the Board E-binder. The Board discussed some of the anomalies in the organizational chart; for instance, the Executive Director needs to have a reporting line to the Board. It was determined that the organizational chart shown needs to be updated.

- Helaine asked who would give the performance appraisal? The President should give the performance review to the Senior Rabbi and the Executive Director. Rabbi Merow asked to work with someone here to do a standardized review process for all who report to her.
- Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges said that there should be language included explicitly in the policy that some roles should require 360 feedback from lay leaders who interact with the person to give feedback (e.g. the VP of Education gives 360 feedback on the Director of Congregational Learning).
- Jesse Treu said that the Rabbi should receive feedback from lay leaders, as well.
- Susan Falcon provided historical institutional memory that every staff person was reviewed by two people: the staff supervisor of that role and the relevant lay leader. There was a standardized form to leverage to conduct those reviews.
- Avi Paradise asked about the timeframe of the reviews and if it was optimal, as well as whether more frequent reviews are needed to help coach performance in certain situations in which dismissal due to performance might be a possibility. Naomi answered that the timeframe was aligned to the mid-year of the TJC fiscal year. For a teacher, it would be ideal to benefit from the feedback mid-year and course correct as needed. Regarding the second point, Naomi didn't think she needed to go into a lot of detail around a dismissal situation in this particular policy. Jesse said that it is an important aspect to work through, since the paper trail of the formal review process under the situation of a potential dismissal is highly relevant. He suggested that we may need human resources lawyer to take a look at it. Randy said that Jesse's point is a very good one. If we have a policy, we have to adhere to it.
- David Greenberg said that everyone employed by TJC have should have feedback. Feedback creates good culture and fosters communication.
- Naomi said that instead of voting on the motion on the floor, that she would take all of the feedback and come back to the Board next time with a revised proposal for consideration and vote.

#### **7. Mid-Year Reflection on Committee Goals - Alexandra Bar-Cohen**

- Alexandra invited Board members to breakout rooms by VP to assess how we are doing at this point in the year and what we need to do going forward.
- She asked the teams to focus on the following questions: What is going well? What is challenging? What are 1-2 immediate goals to tackle now? What do you need to accomplish your goals?
- Each group chatted, and each VP was asked to reflect, summarize the discussion, and add those notes to the Board E-binder. In addition, please email Alexandra with the group's output, especially what is needed from her to support the teams' efforts going forward.

## 8. Safety Committee Update - Naomi Richman-Neumann

- Naomi made a motion to adopt the latest revision to the Safety Policy that was circulated to the Board for review in advance of the meeting.
- Randy Brett raised the procedural point that the Safety Committee makes a recommendation, then the Board needs to approve it. So the Board either needs to approve changes on an on-going basis or needs to designate a person who has the authority to do that without coming back to the Board for a vote on every policy change. Alexandra added that given the fluidity of the pandemic, we are going to need to be nimble.
- Nancy Lewis seconded the motion. The floor was then opened to comments and questions.
- Samantha Hirschberg asked if there would be specific policy for the Religious School. Naomi provided an overview of the policy and changes relative to what had been previously circulated. The Safety Committee debated the vaccination requirement for 5-11 year olds - hopefully, all will have a first dose by February 1, 2022, but they agreed not to make it an official requirement at this point - just strongly recommended it. Children under age five are exempt from the vaccination requirement until the vaccine is authorized for that age group. The policy states that everyone needs to be masked while indoors, except when eating and drinking. Social distance of six feet between family groups must be maintained, but if everyone is vaccinated, that distance can be reduced to three feet. Eating and drinking is now permitted, subject to the guidelines outlined. Self-service buffets are permitted if gloves are used when touching the serving utensils. Parties and gatherings open to the congregation can occur, but no indoor dancing is permitted at congregational-sponsored events, because of social distancing rules. However, private events may have their own rules. Outdoors, masks are required for the unvaccinated, but vaccinated people are not required to wear masks. For the Religious School, the suggestion might be to follow the Princeton Public Schools (PPS) guidelines. Samantha asked for confirmation of whether those guidelines would assume the exact quarantine requirements and seating guidelines that Princeton Public Schools (PPS) adhere to. She is not sure how specific it would get - at what level of their guidelines are we suggesting be followed?
- Naomi shared a number of needs raised by the Safety Committee. She asked Joel Berger to find the best way to get proof of vaccination from congregants who wish to come into the building. She also stated the need to have stronger communication on all policies to the congregation, including mask and vaccine status, and a link to the full policy. She also suggested the need to provide more spacing at services and after services.
- Edye Kamenir asked about Princeton Public Schools (PPS) guidelines. Many children live outside the district in districts that have their own rules. Can the PPS guidelines be shared more broadly, so that we know what we are suggesting be adhered to, especially for families who may not be familiar with PPS's specific guidelines? She also raised the question of how can we stay nimble on this issue. This pandemic has proven to be a highly fluid situation, and it would be a shame to adopt a policy this evening that could be outdated next week given the speed with which the Omicron variant is spreading. Naomi said that they will add language that the President can make a decision without consulting the Board under more exigent circumstances.
- Abbye Cornfield asked if our adoption of the PPS policy would also include assigned seats and the definition of what a close contact is. Also, Governor Murphy's mask mandate in schools expires on January 11, 2022, which is what PPS is following. Would we be boxing ourselves into that decision inadvertently, should the Governor decide NOT to renew the mask mandate or vice versa? Naomi said we would rely on PPS policy for what to do after a

positive case. Abbye clarified that the definition of close contact is different in her school district than in PPS. Naomi suggested that perhaps Sharon Diamondstein and the School Committee can do a separate communication regarding the school policies. Rabbi Merow said that the school definition of a close contact has been three feet. What changed is the desire to do closer contact tracing, so that is what is driving the desire to do assigned seats. That only helps in school, not shul. Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges asked if our adoption of PPS policies requires us to stay in person and not be allowed to hold classes on Zoom, since PPS is not allowed to be on Zoom unless quarantined due to NJ State requirements for public schools. Alexandra said that we could just specify which specific guidelines we leverage from PPS's policy. Naomi said perhaps we need a Religious School-specific policy that lays all of that out.

- Lauren Neufeld said that we should add detail about what it means to properly wear a mask and further clarification around what we mean by a "family unit." She also had a question around Kiddush. If Kiddush is family-style, what happens to the food after the luncheon? Is it discarded or wrapped up and re-served? She also felt that it might be easier to have our own rules around the Religious School, rather than to rely on PPS, as it might be confusing. It might be easier to list all the rules specifically in this document in order to set expectations appropriately going forward.
- Barbara Abramson said that she does not feel qualified to vote on this policy. She has a great deal of confidence in the Safety Committee. We can vote to defer to the Committee and their judgment and can authorize the Committee to make the specific policy and all of the details. We need to be nimble and get the information out to congregants and parents. Naomi said that what Barbara stated is exactly how we have been operating. However, there has been pushback from congregants and Board members on the level of empowerment of the Committee.
- Edye suggested that we should pass a motion to empower the committee, so that the people educated in this area can make the rules for the congregation and that they can remain more nimble than the Board. Having to pass a policy at the Board level every time a change in policy is warranted would be cumbersome. The policy could very well be out-dated by the time the policy is passed by the Board. That is just not sufficiently responsive and nimble in the face of a global pandemic that is currently picking up steam.
- Judy Kutin said that we can't just hand over the keys to a Committee. One Committee cannot dictate all policies - we might as well dissolve the Board. Or we could dissolve the Committee and defer to PPS, since they have actual epidemiologist on staff helping to inform their decisions for the district. Jesse Treu said that the Board does, in fact, have the authority to delegate this aspect to a Committee. Randy Brett acknowledged the frustration, and he said that he created this Safety Committee at the start of the pandemic consisting of an epidemiologist, doctors, and medical professionals, as well as non-medical professionals who know the congregation to provide balance across the concerns and interests of the congregation. The Board often delegates power to Committees for all types of issues.
- Susan Falcon said this is a unique situation and that we should accept the Committee's recommendation, but if it makes sense from a governance perspective to pass something very general, we can do that. But it could include a proviso that says that the Committee has discretion to change things as the conditions dictate. Naomi suggested adding a sentence to the effect of "In consultation with the Safety Committee, the President is authorized to modify this policy as circumstances dictate." Edye said that she would support such an approach if we need to pass something, but it should be worded in as

general a manner as possible, so that we don't have to modify a Board-level policy on what could become a weekly basis.

- Randy suggested that the recommendation brought forth this evening not be viewed as an "official policy." Instead, it could be positioned as TJC's "current thinking." Then we could draft a policy to outline a broader mandate for the Safety and COVID Committee, so they have the parameters around which the Board has invested authority in them. Naomi liked that approach.
- Naomi modified her motion to say that the "sense of the Board" is to adopt these guidelines based on current thinking, while she and others can draft a broader policy for a vote in the future.
- Randy added that Alexandra can convene a Board vote at any time.
- Susan asked if the sentence added can be put at top of document, not at the bottom.
- Lauren asked if we're going to do what Randy suggested. Naomi said we need to adopt this statement now as a "sense of the Board" or the Board's "current thinking" and then draft and pass a new, broader policy next month.
- Lew Gantwerk said that we've been doing pretty well so far with the pandemic with how the Safety Committee has been guiding the congregation and keeping us safe, and he would feel uncomfortable voting tonight on this, since we don't know what the new policy would be. The Committee have already made decisions on the spot and have dealt with the issue of a positive case last week, and it went well, so we could continue the status quo. He is not sure what he would be voting on. Avi Paradise said he felt similarly - he is not sure why we need this done right now.
- The vote on the "sense of the Board" was 17 For, 3 Against, and 14 abstentions.
- The precise wording adopted appears below:

## **TJC SAFETY POLICY**

*This policy is effective 12/17/2021. In consultation with the Safety Committee, the President, is authorized to modify this policy as circumstances dictate.*

### **WHEN INDOORS:**

- Anyone who is eligible to be vaccinated (ages 12 and over) must be vaccinated to enter either of The Jewish Center buildings unless they have a medical exemption
  - Vaccines are strongly recommended for children 5-11 years of age, with the expectation that all will have received their first dose by 2/1/22
  - Children under age 5 are exempt until vaccines are authorized for that age group
- Everyone must be masked with mouth and nose covered, except when eating or drinking as explained below
- Social distance of 6 feet must be maintained between family units with unvaccinated members. Social distancing of 3 feet must be maintained if vaccinated.

- Eating and drinking are permitted, subject to the following guidelines:
  - Masks must be worn unless you are actually eating (must be worn while obtaining food and when done eating)
  - Social distancing between family units must be maintained
  - Buffets can be self-service provided that everyone uses disposable gloves at the buffet
  - To the extent possible, buffets should be spread out in multiple locations to avoid crowding
  - Messaging will be provided at each table regarding risk and to inform attendees that there may be individuals present who are not vaccinated
- Parties and Gatherings that are open to the congregation can occur as long as social distancing and masking rules are followed; indoor dancing is not permitted

#### **WHEN OUTDOORS:**

- Masks are not required for those who are vaccinated; those who are unvaccinated must wear masks.
- Eating and drinking are permitted but family units must remain at least 3 feet apart

#### **PROCEDURES AFTER A POSITIVE TEST BY SOMEONE WHO WAS AT TJC:**

The office will notify all affected individuals by group message with appropriate detail. Quarantine and re-entry by affected individuals, including the person who tested positive, will follow Princeton Public Schools guidelines, available at <https://www.princetonk12.org/resources-and-noticees/health-protocols-2020-2021>

#### **9. New Business - Alexandra Bar-Cohen**

- *Dorot* Task Force - Alexandra reminded the Board of the Phase 1 changes to the TJC dues structure earlier this year, and that we would be evaluating the financial impact of those changes before moving on to Phase 2. She announced the launch of a task force called *Dorot* (meaning "generations"). The task force, to be led by Helaine Isaacs, will be tasked with the job of evaluating the data from Phase 1 of the dues changes to make recommendations for Phase 2, as well as considering the financial impact of alternate dues models. The timeline for their work will be January to March 2022, which will inform our budgeting process for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Jesse Treu pointed out that the Finance Committee would need recommendations a bit earlier in the process to impact the coming year's budget, as the budget planning process normally commences in late January/early February.
- Please consider making a commitment to the Life & Legacy Fund. TJC is currently tied with Beth Chaim on the number of Life and Legacy promises. If you want to sign up to beat Beth Chaim in the spirit of healthy competition, reach out to Joel Berger or Evy Grossman.



**10. Adjournment**

- The meeting went into Executive Session at 9:08PM. No motion was recorded
- The meeting was adjourned at 9:13PM.

Minutes recorded by Edye Kamenir