



General Board Meeting - January 20, 2022

Present:

Barbara Abramson (1)	Martin Ettenberg (2*)	Dana Molina (1)
Shari Allen (2*)	Susan Falcon (2)	Avi Paradise (1)
Brad Bailey (1)	Lew Gantwerk (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)	Tom Will (2*)
Abbye Cornfield (1)	Nancy Lewis (2)	Claude Winn (1)
Dane Dickler (2)	Moshe Margolin (2*)	
	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 7:02PM and was held via video conference.
2. **President's Welcome** - Alexandra Bar-Cohen thanked everyone for joining this evening after a marathon day of other Zoom calls.
3. The **D'var Torah** was delivered by Adam Scheer, who spoke of spoke about *Parshah Yitro*. This parshah recounts the transition from a motley crew of slaves to a nation of priests. Adam summarized that the message for us as leaders is to listen, understand the law, and listen to our fellow humans. Alexandra thanked Adam for his wonderful d'var. She added that *Yitro* is also the parshah that taught her how to be President of TJC with Yitro's advice to Moshe to appoint trusted advisors - all the members of the Board - as her trusted advisors.
4. **Approval of the Minutes**
 - The minutes of the December 20, 2021, Board Meeting were circulated prior to the meeting for review and were approved as circulated in a motion made by Linda Gernis and seconded by Barbara Abramson. The motion passed unanimously with two abstentions.
 - See www.thejewishcenter.org/Resources/Board-Minutes.aspx.

5. Finance Report - Dane Dickler

- Dane provided an overview of TJC's plan to apply for the federal Employee Retention Credit (ERC) program. Historically, if an organization participated in the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) program, it wasn't eligible to participate in the ERC program. But the rules have recently changed, so now TJC is eligible to apply for the ERC program. In the past, an organization was required to have at least a 50% decline in gross receipts from before the pandemic; now, an organization only needs to have a 20% gross decline relative to 2019 on a quarterly basis. We had a reduction of more than 20% in gross receipts in three quarters of 2021. The credit is capped at \$10K per person per quarter, but the impact of the PPP loan in those years to each of the employees needs to be backed out. After all of those calculations, Dane and the Finance team estimate that TJC is entitled to an \$82K credit on the payroll tax return for Q1, \$39K for Q2, and \$76K for Q3, for a total of approximately \$190K. That is great news for TJC!
- The next step is to file amended returns for the affected quarters. Because the IRS is so backed up on processing, it takes up to 6 months to receive the funds from the US Government. Dane hopes to get that wrapped up as quickly as possible. This will likely hit next year's budget, rather than this year's budget based on timing.
- Randy Brett asked for clarification on the credit: 1) is it against FICA; and 2) is there a limit, and does that exceed what we've paid in FICA? Dane said it's an offset against FICA and Medicare, and it's an employee and employer credit. It's fully refundable, because it's calculated on taxes already paid.
- Moshe Margolin thanked Dane for all of his hard work behind the scenes. The Board and congregation are indebted to you for that work and the impact it has on our bottom line.

6. Annual Fund Update - Alexandra Bar-Cohen

- The current Annual Fund appeal has reached \$286K and is still growing, far exceeding the \$250K goal. This achievement was accomplished without a Fundraising chair or a Development Team. Looking back at historical trends, 2014 was the highest Annual Fund total in past 10 years at \$281K, at a time when we had many more members than we do now, which reinforces what an accomplishment this is.
- Alexandra thanks the entire Board for its 100% participation, for modeling the behavior of supporting our community, and for making calls.
- We had more than one donor beyond our highest level, so we are looking at adjusting our giving levels to incentivize even more giving in the future. Currently, the top giving level is Leaders at \$7200. The recommendation is to add a new "Chai Society" level for gifts of \$18K+, and a new level of Pioneers for \$10K and above.
- Jesse Treu asked how the giving histogram lines up to the levels below \$7200? He observed that many groups enact de facto price increases, because they are tied to giving levels at multiples of chai. Alexandra acknowledged that very good point as good food for thought for future efforts.
- Randy Brett added in the comments that Alexandra should be applauded for her extraordinary efforts in achieving our Annual Fund goal.

7. Security Update - Tom Will

- The events of the prior weekend in Colleyville, Texas, have spurred us to act quickly to shore up our security. To review, we have completed the following security upgrades over the last several years: 1) protective coating on windows (nearing completion); 2) awaiting security company to upgrade video cameras; 3) tested the panic button system. Still under consideration are protective barriers around the perimeter of the campus and other upgrades.
- The Safety Committee plans to meet to apply for the grant program offered by the Department of Homeland Security, but that would be designed to meet more of the longer term security needs, since there is a long lead time for the process and, if granted, for those funds to come in.
- The Committee's next meeting is Tuesday, January 24. They will discuss some of the nearer term needs in light of the TX events. We need to think about training and how to prepare staff as quickly as possible. Federation is setting up trainings and providing other resources in the community that we can leverage. We want to set up a special training for our staff and clergy, since that was such an important part of the survival plan of the Rabbi in TX. We can get help from many different organizations, and the Committee will prioritize the offerings and make them available as appropriate.
- Naomi Richman-Neumann added that we will double the number of security guards on campus for the indefinite future. We will continue to have a police presence on our campus.
- Alexandra added that we will send out a letter to the congregation to communicate these developments. She urges the Board to amplify the message that we are doing everything we can to ensure our safety and security. She also thanked Tom, Joel Berger, and the Safety Committee for all of their hard work on security. She urged us all to view ourselves as part of the Safety Committee - if we see something, say something.
- Tom said that many of the calls he had this week shared the point that doubling police coverage is a good thing. He also shared that the FBI does not see the attack in TX as a larger organized effort; rather, it is seen as more of a lone wolf situation, of which more are expected. There aren't that many dots to connect in those cases. We have to say something to law enforcement if we see something. They also don't see any on-going threat related to the particular suspect in this case, but there is concern about copy-cat events.
- Shari Allen asked if we accelerate the timeline of some of our key security initiatives, can we reimburse ourselves using the grant funding after the fact? Tom said that you have to get the grant first and then make the changes as a requirement for the grant. He said they are pushing to increase funding on the grant program, so maybe it will be a little easier to secure grant funding.
- Randy Brett asked about the prior gift from a congregant earmarked specifically for security spending (circa 2019). Do we still have another \$50K remaining and has that been factored into the plan? Tom said that they are aware that funds are remaining, and they plan to use it. Dane confirmed the remaining amount, and that spend is budgeted in this fiscal year.
- Joel Berger provided additional context. There are three projects in progress identified in prior security efforts: window protection, cameras, and bollards. There will be many more synagogues applying for federal security grants. Every time a crisis happens, more synagogues are looking for funds. Security is stressful, and we need the Board and the entire congregation to be our partners. If you see something suspicious, call the police.

- Jesse Treu asked Tom if there is any learning about what could have been done differently in the TX situation? What is best practice if a seemingly homeless person came to our door? Tom didn't hear any specifics on how to stop something like that from happening. On one hand we're a shul - we don't want to have metal detectors everywhere, and we don't want to turn away people in need. Joel said that he hadn't heard anything either. The two messages are this: training (run, hide, fight), and police had access to their cameras. We are going to give access to our cameras to the authorities, even if LiveStream is turned off.
- Naomi shared how the whole Board can be supportive. One example is that the Committee has discussed installing a gate by the driveway for use after hours. In the past, there has been pushback from congregants who wanted access to the parking lot after hours for convenience of parking for events downtown. All of us have to be advocates for our security over convenience. As we implement stricter security policies, we can be champions of that effort.
- Dana Molina raised the point that she wants to make sure that people feel welcome and that we can balance that with the need for safety. It's so important to be both safe and open to people coming. Training is so important. Alexandra thanked Dana for raising that point. She added two things to help strike that balance: 1) make sure that we have greeters at the door, and 2) wear name tags. That way, you know who belongs there and who you need to introduce yourself to, or there may be alarm bells that go off. We need our Board members to sign up to be greeters, and everyone needs to wear their name tags. Talk to Nancy Lewis to sign up to be a greeter.
- Rabbi Merow added several points about the mental health aspect and spiritual healing. Local Rabbis planned a service, which was held on Tuesday, and she connected with the local Imam. She thanked the people who called and asked how she and the staff are doing. Sharon spoke with Gabrielle Cayton-Hodges (VP of Education) and made the decision not to proactively bring up the topic at Religious School, but to offer support if the topic came up organically. There was also a session with the high school students on Wednesday to discuss the events, and it was a very good session. Finally, we should all come together in a show of solidarity and return to shul like we all did post-Pittsburgh.

8. Installation of Rabbi Andrea Merow Update - Joel Berger

- In light of the pandemic resurgence, Joel shared that the dates for the Installation of Rabbi Andrea Merow have been changed. Sunday, May 1, will be the official installation ceremony, followed by a Gala party on Saturday, September 10.
- He thanked Rabbi Merow for her flexibility, and key committee members, Marc Citron, Dina Shaw, Shari Allen, Neil Wise, and Abbye Cornfield for all of their work to make this happen.

9. Clergy Search Update - Abby Cornfield

- Alexandra informed the Board of the need for a change in the composition of the Clergy Search Committee, because the previous composition of the Committee was not in adherence to the Congregational By-Laws. The situation has been rectified by adding non-congregant Alan Medvin and VP of Programming Linda Grenis. By adding those two new members to the Committee, it was too large by one member, requiring one existing

Committee member to become a non-voting ex officio member. Edey Kamenir agreed to act in that capacity.

- Abbye shared with the Board that the Committee has received a number of applications from both Rabbis and Cantors for the open role. We have had many first interviews, and a couple of second interviews. We mentioned last time that it's a tough season for recruiting, because it's a small pool this year with no Cantorial graduates from JTS, and many congregations are in the market for a new clergy person. We are currently applying for a waiver to branch out from Rabbinical Assembly candidates, and that waiver will be granted on 2/1. Alexandra thanked the team for their hard work and many hours devoted to this endeavor.

10. Member Engagement - Alexandra Bar-Cohen

- The "Cocktails in the Corridor" initiative previously planned has been delayed a bit by the rise of the Omicron variant. That is intended to be a wintertime indoors version of the very successful "Cocktails in the Courtyard" events held before Erev Shabbat services during the summer.
- The Membership Committee is continuing efforts to reach out to each of the octogenarians in the congregation.

11. New Business: Inclusion Efforts - Claude Winn and Lauren Neufeld

- Materials outlining a new effort focused on inclusion sponsored by JCW were circulated to the Board prior to the meeting.
- Claude shared that this topic of inclusion across a range of abilities is close to her heart as the mother of a daughter with autism. She pointed out that there is mention of many aspects of inclusion on our website, but not those of disability, particularly of sensory processing challenges. She speaks for all of the families with sensory challenges to feel welcome in the community. We need an integrated effort to be sensitive to those with sensory needs, led by an outside organization. Claude and Lauren recommend Kulture City to be our partner in starting the process to help create the very needed sense of inclusion, belonging, and community for those congregants impacted by sensory challenges.
- Alexandra thanked Claude for trusting us to share her story with us.
- Barbara Abramson said that she was very moved by what Claude shared. She would like more information about the careful cleaning of manipulatives, especially in light of the pandemic. Claude said that she doesn't see the challenge of cleaning manipulatives as any different from cleaning other objects people touch at shul, like doorknobs or siddurim. Just wipe things down. Shari Allen shared that she is a special educator, and it takes less than 10 minutes to clean every surface in a Pre-K classroom. Claude said that Kulture City does this on a large scale basis, and they know how to do this. Barbara mentioned that in her research, the organization recommended as our partner for this initiative appears to be an evangelical organization, since Romans 1:16 is quoted on their website. Claude and Lauren said that they had asked about the mention in their vetting of the company and feel assured that it is not an evangelical organization.
- Lew Gantwerk noted that sensory inclusion is really a meta issue - people who are impacted by sensory issues feel that they are not part of our world in the way we treat them. It raises

macro questions about who is really accepted, and who is really part of this community? Everyone needs to look at one's own prejudices and biases when we see people acting in a way that we may not expect. So the expectation shouldn't be that the program will fix all of the meta issues. But it's really about making a commitment to understand our own resistance to accepting difference and to cherish the gifts others can offer to enhance and enrich our world, rather than just trying "to put up with them."

- Moshe Margolin said it would be nice to understand what the Board has to do. Does the Board have to spend money? Alexandra said that this is just on the agenda to share the initiative that JCW is working on. Lauren mentioned all the ways we have worked to become more inclusive of physical abilities, but the piece that was really missing was the families that have sensory needs, and there was really nothing for them. So it helps us get started and sends a message to families and congregants that they are welcome in our community.
- Linda Grenis sees this initiative as a huge endeavor to have this big culture change, and that culture change starts with leadership. There are many facets that will come into play: training, education, language, books in the library. This initiative will come up with a plan with short-term and long-term goals, and this will be a start. Going forward, on event fliers we will say that if anyone has special needs to contact the main office, so we can be ready to meet those needs at a given event. February is Disability Awareness and Inclusion month. There is an event/speaker on this topic in late February to raise awareness.
- Rabbi Merow added that each of the staff write-ups in the February newsletter focused on this theme.
- Helaine Isaacs thanked Claude for bringing this opportunity to TJC and raising awareness of these issues. Shari Allen also added her support in the chat.

12. New Business: Governance Committee - Randy Brett

- Randy shared that the goal of this Committee is to strengthen the infrastructure of TJC leadership and encourage more participation. The team is focusing on Articles 5, 6, and 8 of the Congregational By-Laws, seeking to make changes that will improve efficiency and get more people involved, but not necessarily through Board meeting attendance. The Committee will be announced when fully staffed. Any changes to the by-laws that the Committee recommends to help achieve these goals would be voted on in the May Congregational Meeting.

13. New Business: Nominating Committee - Adam Scheer

- Adam shared the good news that we have a great committee based on the composition requirements outlined in the by-laws. The by-laws require the Committee to be chaired by an out-going Trustee. The Committee needs to have two current Board members, and Dane Dickler and Dana Molina have agreed to serve on the Committee in this capacity. In addition, the Committee needs to have four congregants at large, and they are: Phil Carchman, Suzanne Esterman, Linda Meisel, and Scott Feldman.
- The Committee is charged with recruiting for the roles of President Elect; Recording Secretary; VP, Membership & Administration; VP, Finance & Development; VP, Programming; and two Trustees.

- As outlined in the by-laws, the recommendation of the Committee is to be delivered by April 1. They plan to meet for the first time next week.
- Adam thanked Edye Kamenir for passing along her preparation materials from her experience as Chair of the 2020 Nominating Committee to Adam and the team to help them build a strong foundation.

14. New Business: Re-Igniting Future Vision - Alexandra Bar-Cohen and Edye Kamenir

- Alexandra shared that for a number of reasons, there has been renewed interest in the future of the empty lot.
- The most recent Long-Range Plan had highlighted the opportunity to "Re-Invest for Growth" through "maximizing the revenue potential of existing assets," including the empty lot (Pillar 4, Action 1 of LRP).
- As a follow-up to that recommendation, Linda Meisel and Randy Brett had convened a Committee spanning their respective tenures as TJC President to explore the options. After much deliberation, the Committee determined that expanding the remit to the entire site would make the most sense. The work of the Committee paused in the aftermath of the passing of Rabbi Adam Feldman z"l and COVID.
- Edye provided an overview of the remit of the new committee to be formed. The first phase of the new effort will be to "Envision the Possibilities" of the entire site, including a vision for what TJC wants to live into and own, being mindful of the need to attract new members and help make the Princeton area a magnet for the urban exodus. Building on a foundation of congregant needs and the needs of the local unaffiliated Jewish community (tbd), this phase will have three different steps:
 1. Inspire & Explore - This step will "cast a wide net" on the possibilities. We will invite outside thought leaders, scout what's worked for other communities, read and explore to stretch the team's thinking on how best to leverage the resources we have.
 2. Ideate & Conceptualize - This step will translate those possibilities into unique concepts or vision boards. Small teams of Committee members will work together to create distinct territories or concepts to help bring to life a number of potential directions. Several hypothetical examples were provided to illustrate the concept.
 3. Listen & Refine - Leveraging the concept boards, we will solicit feedback from multiple stakeholder audiences, including congregants, staff, and the greater community to understand which concepts resonate the most and for what reasons. That input will help refine and shape the lead ideas to move into Phase 2: Feasibility (e.g. How do we best bring this vision to life?).
- Linda Grenis shared her excitement and support for the initiative and thanks Alexandra and Edye for such a clear presentation.

10. Adjournment

- The meeting went into Executive Session at 8:43PM. No motion was recorded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:48PM.

Minutes recorded by Edye Kamenir