

TJC Board Meeting 11/20/25

Present:

Rachelle Simon

Suzanne Esterman

Jerry Neumann

Ed Simon

Lew Gantwerk

Warren Mitlak

Moshe Margolin

Lynne Ross

Brad Bailey

Len Grossman

Dina Shaw

Polly Strauss

RAM

Joel Berger

Edye Kamenir

Judy Kutin

Diane Guvenis

Michelle Bellows

Jen Black

Abigail Rose

7:05 Lew called the meeting to order

I. Governance Committee Presentation

Phil Carchman, Susan Falcon, Art Meisel, Maia Jachimowitz

Phil: We were assessing the size and functioning of the Board and continuity of leadership. Board meetings were reporting boards rather than action boards making decisions. The Board was too many people. Constantly reinventing the wheel due to lack of continuity. Committee chairs did not realize they were Board members and some considered it an imposition. There was a feeling that the President was appointing all committee chairs and that was unfair. Many positions went unfilled.

We came up with a proposal for a smaller board of 5 officers and 10-12 trustees on 3 year staggered terms.

Now committee chairs sit on the Board. The new plan has chairs welcome to attend and invited if there is a relevant issue. Trustees can be a chair or a liaison to a committee. The Skills Matrix identifies skill sets needed to fulfill Board roles. The Nominating Committee has the responsibility to find people with necessary skills to serve on the Board. There will be eight standing committees, fewer than before. We are hoping for a smaller Board and greater participation on committees. Also, an action board and continuity.

Dina: Committee chairs are doing the work. And then there is the Board. I want to make sure that there is not a disconnect between the workers and the people making the decisions.

Phil: Committee chairs can be a Trustee. But now they don't have to have the added responsibility of being on the Board.

Susan: All trustees are at large.

Edye: Agreed that a smaller board is good. Reporting vs action board, I think is often determined by the President. Continuity-staggered trustee terms accomplishes that, but I think in Finance etc having continuity in committee chairs would be helpful. How can we do that? Also, there are chronically unfilled roles, especially fundraising. How would this plan make someone leap to lead fundraising? Now there is a standing committee looking for trustees. How would the process really play out?

Phil: Bylaws spell out the composition of the Nominating committee. Yes, nominating committee will start identifying people. We are hoping for a pool of people stepping up because they have the skill set.

Edye: If approved by the Board, this would be implemented June 1?

Phil: No specific year was put in.

Edye: Why not President and VP's with a few trustees?

Phil: A sense that there is siloing in that system. Ten at-large Trustees elected by the congregation is coming from a different place.

Judy: As VP Education I can barely keep up with my area, the idea of not being siloed and being aware of all the other roles would be too much.

Phil: You have a responsibility to know what the organization is doing, but you don't have to have complete knowledge in that committee.

Susan: This Board isn't running education or programming, staff and committee chairs are. This Board is planning for the future of the synagogue, oversight responsibility.

Lynne: Feels like more people will need to volunteer and get involved. It's a problem getting people to step up.

Susan: This plan allows people to have options to be a committee chair or a trustee. Also a smaller number of people. Getting volunteers will always be an issue.

Warren: I support a smaller Board. There is a difference between the EC and the Board. Have you considered having the EC and the Board as one group that meets?

Phil: Defining the EC is critical. Different presidents have used the EC differently. Also, the EC sits at the service of the President.

Suzanne: Staggered terms are nice, but there needs to be a process to hand off the knowledge so new people coming in know what they're doing.

II. Annual Fund Update

Lew: 131 donations so far, about ¼ of community. Half of the Board has not contributed and we are aiming for 100% participation.

III. Board Ambassador Update

Lew: Invite people to join for this Shabbat. Reconnect at holidays. I am your liaison and want to wish you well.

IV. Shabbat L'Kulanu

RAM: The goal of Shabbat L'kulanu is to have people feel welcome here, not just in the religious space. Each grade in RS is leading something. After the Torah Service, there will be a play on the bimah. Jewish ideas about gratitude will be studied separately by kids and adults. Shema Yoga and Shabbat Katan at 11:00. Kids will come back for the end of the service. There will be a special lunch with questions at the table to get people to talk. The goal is to get people in the building doing something interesting and creative while still having a Jewish service.

V. Corner Lot Update

Lew: Subgroup met on Friday with the Town Planning Committee. Two questions We asked if 19 units are minimum or maximum? The answer was there are no constraints, 40 or more could be acceptable. If we do nothing, is that ok? Absolutely, our units are not needed to meet Mt. Laurel obligation. It is up to us. Bob Powell, an outside consultant, has volunteered to help.

VI. Replacing Air Conditioners

Joel: There is a PSE&G Incentive program we want to use to replace AC units at discount cost with financing. Electricity savings, also. Two out of ten units are new. Eight AC units would be replaced, to be paid off over five years. There would be a separate package for the one rooftop unit on the RS building.

Jerry: This is a lot of money to be voted on tonight. The Finance committee has not looked at it yet. Are there any other options we should look at? Maybe overlay with solar.

Warren: We can afford this, but it feels a little rushed.

Judy makes a motion to vote on the proposal. Jen seconds. Jerry, Warren opposed, Moshe, Polly, Brad abstain, 13 approve

VII. Dec 7 Meeting with Mayor and Police Chief 10:00 at TJC

VIII. New Business/Good and Welfare

RAM: Monday Interfaith Thanksgiving Service organized by Sarah Just and Alison Politziner

Dina makes a motion to approve last month's minutes, Len seconds. Minutes approved.

IX. Executive Session

9:07 Meeting Adjourned