

Board of Trustees Meeting
December 18, 2019
6:15p

Minutes

Chair: Heidi Schell ♦ Minutes: Arlene Rosenberg ♦ Timekeeper: Andy Oliff

Attendees

Board

Nathaniel Bergson-Michelson
Julie Feuchtwang
Jenna Fisher
Scott Haber
Jon Herstein
Marilyn Hollinger
Ware Kuschner
Jason Pollard
Andy Oliff
Gene Podkaminer
Betsy Rosen

Arlene Rosenberg
Lisa Rosenthal
Eric Schlezinger
Heidi Schell
Adam Steinberger
Mary Ann Waterman
Stuart Zussman

Absent

Maria Yarmolinsky

Staff

Rabbi Dan Feder
Rabbi Lisa Delson
Karen Wisialowski
Ayelet Shapiro

Individual Trustee action item:

1. Heidi will send each Board member (1) the Power Point slides from Gila Hadani Ward's presentation on the URJ's Benchmarking and Assessment project; and (2) copies of all the tools used in the URJ's Benchmarking and Assessment project.

Heidi called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm.

1. Welcome

- Heidi thanked Trustees Jenna Fisher, Julie Feuchtwang, and Maria Yarmolinsky for organizing a staff appreciation breakfast, which will be held on Monday, December 23 from 9-10am.
- Heidi thanked Andy Oliff and Michael Fried for organizing a League of Extraordinary Mensches outing with Mariano to thank him for his help building the Sukkah and on Mitzvah Day.
- Heidi congratulated Rabbi Delson for being named to the California Religious Action Center leadership team.

2. D'var Torah (*Nathaniel Bergson-Michelson*)

3. Blessing for Community Service

4. URJ Biennial Highlights (*Heidi Schell and various Biennial attendees*)

Presentation/Discussion

- The Board was joined (via Zoom) by Gila Hadani Ward, Director of Congregational Relationships and Resources at the URJ, who presented an overview of the URJ's Benchmarking and Assessment project.
 - The goals of the project are to help congregations:
 - Assess strengths and weaknesses;
 - Compare themselves to similar congregations around the country; and
 - Strengthen their relationship with the URJ.
 - The hope is that congregations will repeat the evaluation process every 3-4 years so that they can measure their progress over time.
 - The project provides congregations with three tools:
 - A congregant survey, which is designed to:
 - Help synagogues understand the priorities and needs of their local community;
 - Create local and national benchmarks against which to measure synagogues; and
 - Provide input into the process of continuous synagogue improvement and planning.
 - A Board self-assessment:
 - Each congregation submits one self-assessment, which is meant to represent the Board's consensus.
 - The self-assessment contains four sections:
 - Mission/vision/values;
 - Governance;
 - Leadership culture; and
 - Leadership development.
 - A Financial and Operating Tool, which is designed to:
 - Gather data around synagogue financials to perform calculations and gather a stronger sense of financial stability; and
 - Create relevant benchmarks against which to measure synagogues.
 - Heidi noted that the three assessment tools can be used separately and at different times, but ideally are meant to be used together.
 - Trustees asked questions and raised concerns about the difficulty of making comparisons across synagogues; the inability to customize the tools, and the ability to act meaningfully on the data collected.
 - Heidi will send each Board member (1) the Power Point slides from Gila Hadani Ward's presentation; and (2) copies of all the tools used in the URJ's Benchmarking and Assessment project.
- The Board viewed a slide show created by Marilyn Hollinger that summarized the experiences and takeaways of those who attended Biennial.

5. Board Retreat (*Heidi Schell*)

Presentation/Discussion

- Heidi reminded Trustees that the Board Retreat is currently scheduled for January 26, although it may be rescheduled to allow more time for planning and to enable us to employ Lou Feldstein as a facilitator.

6. Succession (*Heidi Schell*)

Presentation

- Heidi announced that Jason Pollard has agreed to be considered for nomination to the role of PTS treasurer when Adam steps down at the end of this fiscal year.
- Per our bylaws, a committee to nominate next year's Board officers (other than president) will be formed in June 2020, and those officers will be elected at the July 2020 Board meeting.
- To help Jason prepare to take over as treasurer next year, he will begin working with Adam to learn the job and will join the Executive Committee as an at-large member effective immediately.

7. Budget Preview (*Adam Steinberger, Karen Wisialowski*) Presentation

- Adam provided an overview of the budget process:
 - The first step is for each department or committee to submit information about any new programs or projects they hope to introduce in the coming year that will entail a meaningful cost.
 - Next, departments and committees will submit their anticipated budgets for the coming year.
 - The Finance Committee will meet several times in January and February to prepare the 2020-21 budget.
 - Adam and Karen will preview the budget at the Board's March or April meeting and the Board will vote on the budget at the following month's meeting.
- Heidi encouraged Board members to attend at least one Finance Committee meeting.

8. Purim Mishloach Manot (*Betsy Rosen*) Presentation

- Heidi thanked Betsy for once again volunteering to lead the Board's Mishloach Manot fundraiser.
- Betsy announced that we will be making a few improvements to the program this year.
- Betsy asked all Trustees to become Mishloach Manot "sponsors" by donating \$360.
- Heidi reminded the Board that our goal for this year's fundraiser is to net \$20,000. (Last year, we netted \$12,000.)

9. Board Packet Q&A Discussion

- Heidi thanked Karen for submitting all the paperwork for the Homeland Security grant.
- Karen announced that the replacement of certain panes in the Youth Education wing's Window of Names is underway and should be complete in about one month.

10. Governance (*Heidi Schell*) Vote

Motion:

To designate the following parsonage amounts, represented as percentages of total current salary, as requested by each clergy member for the tax year 2020. (*Adam Steinberger*)

Rabbi Lisa Delson	67.5%
Rabbi Dan Feder	42.6%
Cantor Alexandra Fox	41.1%
Rabbi Molly Plotnik	36.0%

Background: The guiding principle behind parsonage is that clergy do not pay Federal income tax on income that is used to cover the cost of housing, broadly defined. Its genesis was the commonplace tradition that clergy live in homes owned by their employers/religious institutions. In the 1950s, the IRS codified the tax-free status of this benefit, which also applies to the cost of housing regardless of whether the clergy lives in the property owned by the

employer or pays for housing independently.

For purposes of a board vote, parsonage refers to the amount a clergy person pays to maintain his/her home (e.g., rent, mortgage, utilities, repairs) when housing or a housing allowance is not provided directly. The clergy person is solely responsible for calculating the parsonage amount each year, and to defend it in the event of an IRS audit. By offering a parsonage benefit (which is stipulated in clergy contracts at Peninsula Temple Shalom), PTS agrees to designate the stated amount as a housing allowance before paying it to the clergy person each year.

- Adam made the motion. Nathaniel seconded. Motion passed.

Motion:

To ratify the use of \$47,000 in the Financial Freedom Fund, which was used to make a principal payment on the mortgage on December 9, 2019. (*Arlene Rosenberg*)

Vote

Background: The Executive Committee approved the expenditure on December 5, 2019 to take advantage of the no prepayment-penalty environment and because the Financial Freedom Fund has this singular purpose. The resulting mortgage balance was \$125,001 on December 10, 2019. See CCO report for an analysis of the remaining mortgage balance.

- Arlene made the motion. Marilyn seconded. Motion passed.

11. Consent Agenda

Includes last month's Board minutes, approval of new members, and approval of administrative resignations.

Vote

- Consent agenda approved.

12. Executive Session

- Jon moved that the Board enter Executive Session. Eric seconded. The Board entered Executive Session at 8:05p. While in Executive Session, the Board passed a motion relating to a personnel matter. The Board exited Executive Session at 8:58pm.

13. Concluding Prayer

Meeting adjourned at 8:59pm.