

# PENINSULA TEMPLE SHOLOM

## Annual Meeting | May 31, 2020

### Via Zoom

## Minutes - DRAFT

Chair: Heidi Schell ♦ Minutes: Arlene Rosenberg ♦ Host: Karen Wisialowski

### 1. Welcome & Housekeeping (*Karen Wisialowski, CCO*)

- Karen welcomed everyone to the meeting and reviewed some administrative details.

### 2. Opening Song (*Cantor Fox*)

### 3. Call to Order and Belonging Activity (*Heidi Schell, President*)

- Heidi officially called the meeting to order at 10:10am and confirmed the presence of a quorum.
- Heidi invited attendees to type into the chat a few words about what “belonging” means to them.

### 4. Teaching (*Rabbi Delson*)

- Rabbi Delson offered a teaching on the meaning of “belonging.”

### 5. President’s Remarks (*Heidi Schell*)

- Heidi noted that although the COVID-19 pandemic has forced PTS to adapt in many ways, PTS’s vision of being an inclusive Jewish community where everyone can find peace, inspiration, and their own connection to Judaism has remained unchanged.
- Heidi praised PTS’s clergy and staff for their response to the pandemic and assured congregants that PTS will emerge from this crisis thoughtfully, prudently, and stronger than ever.
- Heidi noted that we are looking forward to welcoming our new clergy – Rabbi Liora Alban and Cantor Anna Zhar – at the beginning of July.
- Heidi thanked the PTS community for its support of her presidency.
- Heidi’s complete remarks are attached to these minutes as Appendix A.

### 6. Senior Rabbi’s Remarks and Remembering Congregants (*Rabbi Dan Feder*)

- Rabbi Feder recognized that this past year has not been the year we expected. Instead of working toward the goals we set at the beginning of the year, since February or March we have been forced to engage in a constant process of tearing down and re-beginning.
- Rabbi Feder complimented PTS's staff and lay leaders for helping PTS adapt to life in the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Rabbi Feder stated that it has been a privilege for him to lead the congregation during this difficult time. He noted that during difficult times, it is important to have a community that reminds us of what matters in the world and teaches us how to live lives of meaning.
- Rabbi Feder thanked Madeleine Steckley, Cantor Alexandra Fox, and Rabbi Molly Plotnik for their many contributions to PTS and wished them blessings in their future endeavors.
- Rabbi Feder remembered those members of our community who have died since our last annual meeting.
- Rabbi Feder recognized and thanked Heidi for her inspired leadership over the past two years.
- Rabbi Feder's complete remarks are attached to these minutes as Appendix B.

7. Approval of 2019 Minutes (*Arlene Rosenberg, Secretary*)

- Michael Battat requested that in the future, the complete texts of the Rabbi's and President's reports be submitted as part of the annual meeting minutes. Arlene replied that this year's reports would be made available.
- Arlene moved for approval of the minutes of the 2019 Annual Meeting. Lisa Rosenthal seconded the motion. Karen and Arlene reported that based on the preliminary Zoom poll results, the motion appeared to have passed. After the meeting, Karen and Arlene reviewed the Zoom polling report and the saved chat and confirmed that the motion did in fact pass.
- Arlene moved for approval of the minutes of the special congregational meeting that was held on June 21, 2019. Ware Kushner seconded the motion. Karen and Arlene reported that based on the preliminary Zoom poll results, the motion appeared to have passed. After the meeting, Karen and Arlene reviewed the Zoom polling report and the saved chat and confirmed that the motion did in fact pass.

8. Introduction of New Trustees and Election of Slate (*Lauren Schlezinger, Nominating Committee Chair and Immediate Past President*) and Introduction of Incoming Lay Leaders (*Heidi Schell*)

New Trustees nominated for two-year terms: Laurie Friedman, Roger Lazarus, Alison Poggi León

Current Trustees nominated for two-year terms:  
 Marilyn Hollinger, third two-year term  
 Gene Podkaminer, third two-year term  
 Betsy Rosen, third two-year term  
 Arlene Rosenberg, third two-year term  
 Eric Schlezinger, second two-year term  
 Maria Yarmolinsky, second two-year term

Incoming lay leaders: Linda Citron (will serve on PTS Board on behalf of Sholom Women) and Diane Koss, Sholom Women co-Presidents; Betsy Magen and Lauren Miller, PTO co-Presidents; Michael Fried and Andy Oliff, continuing co-chairs of the League of Extraordinary Menschen; Sydney Roncal, PARTY President

- Lauren introduced the new Trustee nominees: Alison Poggi León, Laurie Friedman, and Roger Lazarus.
- Lauren thanked the members of the Nominating Committee -- Julie Feuchtwang, Andy Oliff, Maria Realyvasquez, Jen Silk, Sharon Silverman and Stuart Zussman -- for their teamwork and accountability.
- Lauren moved for approval of the slate of new and returning Trustees. Alan Zeichik seconded the motion. Karen and Arlene reported that based on the preliminary Zoom poll results, the motion appeared to have passed. After the meeting, Karen and Arlene reviewed the Zoom polling report and the saved chat and confirmed that the motion did in fact pass.
- Heidi thanked Lauren and the Nominating Committee for their thoughtful work.
- Heidi acknowledged the incoming and continuing leaders of Sholom Women, Preschool PTO, League of Extraordinary Menschen, and PARTY. She also acknowledged and introduced incoming Board president Jon Herstein.

#### 9. Acknowledgement of Retiring Trustees and Lay Leaders

Heidi acknowledged outgoing Trustees Nathaniel Bergson-Michelson, Adam Steinberger, and Mary Ann Waterman; outgoing PTO co-Presidents Davina Chall and Dannielle Weil, and outgoing PARTY President Isabelle Friedman.

Julie Feuchtwang acknowledged and thanked Heidi Schell on behalf of the Board.

#### 10. Youth Education and Adult Learning (*Rabbi Molly Plotnik, Director of Education*)

- Adult Learning:
  - Rabbi Plotnik experimented this year with new programs such as Movie Midrash. She also brought excellent guests to our congregation, such as Louise Aronson, the author of *Elderhood*; Chava Mirel and Rabbi Leora Kaye, who joined us at our congregational retreat; and Anat Hoffman, Executive Director of the Israel Religious Action Center, who shifted her appearance to Zoom after the shelter-in-place order was issued.
  - Rabbi Plotnik thanked Jack and Candee Klein for continuing to be great supporters and allowing us to bring incredible speakers to our community.
- Youth Education:
  - This was the first year of our new Shabbat-based Youth Education programs. Rabbi Plotnik has gathered feedback on the programs and has been thinking about changes that could be made in the future, but feels that now is not the right time to make dramatic changes. Instead, she has passed the feedback on to Rabbi Alban for future consideration.
  - The Youth Education program switched to online instruction in March. Students appreciated being able to continue to stay connected.

- Musical programming:
  - Rabbi Plotnik acknowledged and thanked Cantor Fox for assembling a group of musicians and musical guests to lead and teach us through music.

#### 11. Camp Sholom and Preschool (*Allison Steckley, Director of Early Childhood Education*)

- Online preschool:
  - The preschool discontinued in-person operations on March 13 and began online instruction on March 16. Online programming allowed preschool students and families to stay connected to the school and to one another.
  - The online programming included Zoom meetings; weekly phone calls with teachers; and an enhanced Facebook page with content such as teacher videos, Spanish classes, weekly Shabbat and Havdalah celebrations, and ideas for families to try on their own.
- Camp Sholom:
  - An order issued by the San Mateo County Health Department on May 15 will allow us to open camp this summer.
  - Required protocols will include limiting class size to 10 children; maintaining stable groups of children and teachers for the entire session; allowing only one class at a time to use common areas; and cleaning common areas between uses.
  - The plan is to hold two four-week camp sessions, with admission limited to students who are already in our preschool program.
- Next year:
  - The preschool is fully enrolled for next year.
  - The preschool has formed a “reentry task force” that will address issues such as how to accommodate as many students as possible under new safety protocols and what remote learning will look like if the school has to close again.

#### 12. Financial Freedom (*April Glatt, Past President*)

- April recounted the history of the Financial Freedom campaign. She noted that when she became Board president in 2014, she recognized that the annual cost of servicing the mortgage was a big burden on our community, taking \$103K per year away from other programming. She committed herself to a campaign to get rid of the mortgage and gathered a strategic planning team consisting of Bruce Isackson, Scott Rodrick, Jeff Silk, Ron Sosnick, and Keith Tandowsky to help create a plan.
- April announced that on June 20, we will pay our last installment to eliminate the mortgage. She noted that it is a gift to be relieved of the mortgage obligation at this time of financial challenge.

#### 13. Treasurer’s Report (*Adam Steinberger, Treasurer*)

- 2019-20 fiscal year:
  - Our 2019-20 budget was nearly \$4.7M.
  - Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, preschool revenue was significantly less

than expected. Preschool parents donated \$117K in place of tuition to offset some of the lost revenue. In addition, the administrative team found cost savings. Nevertheless, we expect to finish the current fiscal year with a deficit of approximately \$180K.

- Fortunately, we have a “rainy day” or reserve fund that can cover this deficit, giving us flexibility and time to adjust to the changes ahead.
- In addition, we received a loan through the Payroll Protection Program (part of a federal COVID-19 relief package), most of which is expected to be forgiven.
- Budgeting for next year:
  - Adam acknowledged and thanked Finance Committee members Judy Bornstein, Roger Lazarus, David Monasch, Jason Pollard, Jeff Savitz (z”l), and Nick Zeitlin for their hard work on the budget.
  - Budgeting was particularly difficult this year because there are so many unknowns about how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect revenues and operations in the coming year.
  - In creating the budget, the Finance Committee focused on the synagogue’s priorities and values, such as keeping our community safe; limiting staff furloughs wherever possible; and sharing the sacrifice needed to get us through the tough times ahead.
  - The 2020-21 budget assumes a \$600K revenue decrease from the 2019-20 budget. It responds to this anticipated decrease by cutting non-personnel costs wherever possible; implementing a hiring freeze (which does NOT apply to our new cantor and director of education, both of whom were hired before COVID); freezing salaries for non-senior staff; and instituting pay cuts for senior staff. To the extent that these cost reductions are insufficient to cover the decrease in revenue, the gap will be filled from our “rainy day” fund.
  - Adam noted that we must be prepared for additional difficulties. The budget is not “one and done”; it will be revisited frequently and adjusted as needed.
  - We are asking congregants to step up with additional contributions if they are able to do so.

#### 14. Honoring Outstanding Volunteers (*Heidi Schell, Andy Oliff, Mary Ann Waterman, Rabbi Dan Feder*)

Trustee of the Year – Adam Steinberger (presented by Heidi Schell)

Volunteer of the Year – Michael Fried (presented by Andy Oliff)

Woman of Valor – Lois Fried (presented by Mary Ann Waterman)

Ner Tamid – Sharon Silverman (presented by Rabbi Dan Feder)

#### 15. Congregational Questions and Comments (*Heidi Schell*)

- Heidi answered the following questions submitted by congregants:
  - What is the enrollment in the religious school? *There were over 200 students enrolled during the past year. We will soon launch registration for next year.*
  - What is the plan for the replacement of Rabbi Molly and Cantor Fox? *We were fortunate to have successfully completed both clergy searches before*

*COVID. Rabbi Liora Alban will be joining PTS as the new Director of Education, and Cantor Anna Zhar will be our new cantor. Both will begin on July 1, even if we are still operating remotely at that time.*

- *Have you started to think about planning for High Holiday services this fall, or is that too far out to plan right now? The health and safety of our clergy, staff, and congregants are paramount. As a result, the clergy and senior staff are planning for remote High Holy Days (“HHD”) services. We are currently thinking about how best to make the HHD engaging in ways that take advantage of the latest and greatest digital tools. We plan to send more information to the congregation in July.*
- *What is the plan if the preschool cannot reopen? The senior staff and lay leaders have created various scenarios and contingency plans, including what levers need to be pulled and what further reductions in costs need to be made, based on whether the preschool opens fully, partially, or not at all in the fall. The Board plans to review the budget frequently throughout the year and will make recommendations and adjustments as needed. Your generosity through membership commitment and contributions to the COVID-19 Recovery Fund will help mitigate any negative impact on programs and offerings of the synagogue. Thank you to all of you who have already renewed your membership and made donations.*

16. Closing Song (*Cantor Fox*)

17. Adjourn Meeting (*Heidi Schell*)

- Heidi thanked the staff who made the virtual meeting possible.
- Meeting adjourned at 11:50am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Arlene Rosenberg, Board Secretary

## Appendix A

### **Annual Meeting Remarks**

May 31, 2020

Heidi Schell, President

Thank you, Rabbi Delson, for those inspiring words.

We convene this morning not simply to satisfy our Bylaws requirement, but, more importantly, to reflect on the past year, look forward to the coming year, and partake in our inclusive Jewish community. Your presence here today is testimony to the strength of our community.

PTS is here because of, for you, and with you. You matter.

Our world has changed dramatically in the past few months, including how we at PTS gather. Our worship services, Torah study, Youth Education programs, adult learning classes, and more are all being held virtually. Even our beautiful farewell service for Rabbi Molly and Cantor Fox. What hasn't changed is that PTS is still here, in new and innovative ways, fulfilling our vision of being an inclusive Jewish community where everyone can find peace, inspiration, and their own connection to Judaism.

These are extraordinary times and we are blessed to have extraordinary clergy and staff who pivoted quickly and responded creatively and compassionately to the needs of our community once the COVID crisis unfolded. Their efforts on behalf of PTS and the flexibility and speed with which they embraced the new normal of working remotely have been truly phenomenal.

This morning, you will hear from members of our clergy and senior staff about the ways in which PTS has adapted to the pandemic, and what's on the horizon. There remains much uncertainty as new orders are issued and the COVID situation unfolds. As we make plans to emerge from this crisis, we intend to be flexible and innovative, thoughtful and prudent, all while being guided by our core values and the need to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of our community. We intend to emerge stronger, together.

We look forward to welcoming our two new clergy – Director of Education Rabbi Liora Alban, and Cantor Anna Zhar – who will be joining our PTS community on July 1. They are both thrilled to become part of our family and we are excited to have them. Stay tuned for opportunities to meet them – virtually and in person – as restrictions allow.

It has been an absolute privilege to work in sacred partnership with our amazing clergy – Rabbi Feder, Rabbi Delson, Rabbi Molly, and Cantor Fox – our Chief Community Officer, Karen Wisialowski, our Director of Early Childhood Education Allison Steckley, the entire administrative and custodial staff, and my fellow lay leaders. I am immensely proud of and grateful for their tireless and selfless dedication to our community.

I want to thank my husband, Steve, for his love and unwavering tactical and moral support during my presidency. I could not have done it without him.

I recently watched a TedxTalk by a gentleman named Shola Richards. He shared the concept of Ubuntu, an African word that means “I am because we are.” He said “To lead with Ubuntu means people follow you because they choose to, not because they have to. The easiest way to make that happen is by saying ‘I will go first by leading with kindness, compassion, and connectedness.’”

Connection has been the primary goal of my presidency. If I have even remotely succeeded in leading with Ubuntu, then I have done so because of you and our sacred community.

I would now like to invite Rabbi Dan Feder to share his remarks.

Appendix B

**[To be inserted]**