

Board of Trustees Meeting
September 16, 2020
6:15p via Zoom

Minutes

Chair: Jon Herstein ♦ Minutes: Arlene Rosenberg ♦ Timekeeper: Andy Oliff

Attendees

Board

Linda Citron
Julie Feuchtwang
Jenna Fisher
Laurie Friedman
Scott Haber
Jon Herstein
Marilyn Hollinger
Roger Lazarus
Andy Oliff
Gene Podkaminer

Alison Poggi León
Betsy Rosen
Arlene Rosenberg
Lisa Rosenthal
Eric Schlezinger
Maria Yarmolinsky
Stuart Zussman

Guests

Diane Koss

Absent

Ware Kuschner
Jason Pollard

Jon called the meeting to order at 6:20pm.

1. Welcome (*Jon Herstein*)

- Since we cannot take a group Board photo right now due to COVID, Marilyn suggested that each Trustee send her a head shot, which she will use to create a collage that can be posted on the Board page of the PTS website.

2. D'var Torah (*Lisa Rosenthal*)

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav
v'tsivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah*

3. Blessing for Community Service

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav
v'tsivanu la'asok b'tzorchay tzibur*

4. Budget Update (*Jon Herstein*)

Inform

- In Jason's absence, Jon provided the following updates relating to the budget:
 - The preschool opened on September 8 with an enrollment of 115 students.
 - The preschool recently received a \$92K grant from the Jewish Federations of North America. Jon expressed gratitude to preschool parents Wendy Verba and Janet Harris for bringing the availability of this grant to Allison and Karen's attention
 - We believe that our PPP loan will be fully forgiven.

5. COVID-19 Task Force Update (*Laurie Friedman*)

Inform

- Although most task force work was put on hold in the leadup to the High Holy Days, Laurie and Marilyn have been working on COVID-related communications and have created a draft of a COVID recovery page for the PTS website. This page will show congregants how PTS is adapting various aspects of synagogue life to COVID requirements and will contain many useful links.
- After the High Holy Days, the task force will schedule a series of regular weekly meetings and will begin looking ahead to the reopening of our physical space (although we don't know when that will occur). The task force will discuss which activities and populations will be brought back into the building first and what protocols will be employed to ensure safety and compliance with legal requirements.
- Trustees noted that older congregants in particular seem very eager to get back into the building.

6. Virtual B'nai Mitzvah Feedback (*Jon Herstein, Gene Podkaminer*) Inform

- Jon reported that the synagogue has conducted three virtual B'nai Mitzvah so far. One was conducted with the family in their own home, while the other two were conducted at PTS, with the family in the chapel, Cantor Anna in the sanctuary, and Rabbi Feder in his study. The general consensus is that the experience was much better when the family was at PTS, so that will be the preferred model going forward. The clergy and staff have worked hard to address the logistical challenges of conducting virtual B'nai Mitzvah while also being mindful of the experience of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah teen.
- Gene shared his perspective as the father of a young woman who will become a Bat Mitzvah in two weeks. He stated that his family is feeling comfortable with the plans and is anticipating a good experience.

7. High Holy Days Board Outreach Feedback (*Julie Feuchtwang, Stuart Zussman*) Discuss

- Stuart thanked Trustees for participating in the High Holy Days outreach and asked for feedback on the process.
- Julie added that congregants greatly appreciated the outreach, particular older adults who miss coming to the synagogue to connect with friends. She also reminded Trustees to pass along to the office staff any information they obtained about incorrect email addresses or phone numbers.
- Trustees shared feedback on their High Holy Day outreach experiences.

8. Governance (*Jon Herstein*) Inform/Vote

Motion: To approved new *Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof* (Justice, Justice, You Shall Pursue) Social Justice Fund. This fund was created anonymously to support social justice initiatives and programs at PTS that aim to make the world a better and more peaceful place. Sample programs may include building interfaith relations (including in partnership with the Peninsula Multifaith Coalition), advocating for justice and anti-racism, and hosting or participating in educational programs and conferences.

Background

PTS has received a \$25,000 donation from a congregant for the purpose described above.

- Arlene made the motion. Marilyn seconded.
- Trustees discussed the purpose of this fund, how this fund is distinct from our existing social action fund, and who will decide how the money in this fund will be used.
- Motion passed.

9. Bylaws Task Force Update (*Scott Haber*)

Inform

- Scott reminded Trustees why we are revising our bylaws at this time. He noted that the bylaws were last amended in 2007 and that over the past several years, we have discovered areas in which the bylaws do not provide us with good answers to issues, fail to match our mission and values, fail to match our current practices, and/or fail to comply with current law.
- The Bylaws Task Force, which consists of both Trustee and non-Trustee congregants plus Karen and Rabbi Feder, has met several times to discuss policy issues implicated by the bylaws revision. In addition, a subgroup of the task force, consisting of Scott, Arlene, Karen, and David Levitt, has met several times to conduct a line-by-line re-drafting of the bylaws, focusing on technical issues such as legal compliance, organization, and consistency in the use of terms.
- At this point, we have a substantially complete draft with only a handful of open issues to be resolved.
- Next steps:
 - Review the current draft with Karen and Rabbi Feder after the High Holy Days;
 - Reconvene the full task force for one or two meetings to resolve final issues;
 - Present a completed draft to the Board for review and comment (probably at the December Board meeting);
 - Process the revised bylaws with key constituent groups within the congregation, with the goal of socializing the changes so that the draft ultimately presented for a congregational vote will not be controversial;
 - Present a final draft to the Board for approval (NOTE: the current bylaws require Board approval to be conducted over the course of two Board meetings, one to present the revised bylaws to the Board and one to vote on them); and
 - Submit the revised bylaws to a vote of the full congregation, either at the Annual Meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose.
- Trustees asked questions about the extent to which proposed changes to the bylaws represent substantive changes in governance as opposed to mere modernization. Scott gave examples of some of the more substantive changes being considered.
- Scott invited Trustees to bring any issues relating to the bylaws to him or Arlene.

10. Board Priorities (*Jon Herstein*)

Discuss

- Jon asked Trustees to review the 2019-20 Board priorities and discuss the following:
 - Whether any of last year's priorities now seem incorrect or irrelevant;
 - Whether anything is missing from the priorities that needs to be added; and
 - Whether any tweaks or adjustments to the priorities are needed.
- Trustees recommended that adapting to and recovering from COVID be listed as a separate priority.
- Trustees agreed that the other priorities identified last year remain priorities for this year, but noted that the way we approach these priorities may be different due to COVID.
- Trustees discussed the need envision and reimagine what the synagogue will look like over the next 5, 10, or 15 years. They also discussed the possibility of developing both short- and long-term goals and strategies within each priority area.

11. Membership Development and Board Responsibilities (*Jon Herstein*)

Discuss

- Jon noted that he has sensed frustration from the synagogue's professional leadership that every year, the Board identifies membership as a priority, but does not provide leadership on tackling the issue.
- Jon invited Trustees to discuss how we can break the membership problem down into manageable parts and begin to tackle it.
- Trustees' observations and suggestions included the following:

- o We need our professional staff to provide more strategic leadership on this issue since they have day-to-day involvement with the membership
- o We should investigate what resources are available through the URJ.
- o We need one or two Trustees to take responsibility for the membership issue.
- o During COVID, we may need to focus on member retention rather than membership development.
- o We need research to tell us what our congregants want/need from the synagogue and what will keep them engaged. We should be cautious, however, to remember that the things people want/need from the synagogue during COVID may not be the same things they want/need during more conventional times.

12. Board Packet Q&A

Discuss

- No questions.

13. Consent Agenda

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

Vote

- Consent agenda approved.

14. Concluding Prayer

Meeting adjourned at 8:14 pm.