

Board of Trustees Meeting
February 17, 2021
6:15p via Zoom

Minutes - DRAFT

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
Ware Kuschner
Roger Lazarus
Andy Oliff
Jason Pollard

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

Absent

Gene Podkaminer

Staff

Rabbi Liora Alban
Rabbi Dan Feder
Ayelet Shapiro
Karen Wisialowski
Cantor Anna Zhar

Jon called the meeting to order at 6:18 pm.

1. Welcome (*Jon Herstein*) 5 min

2. D'var Torah (*Betsy Rosen*) 5 min
Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah

3. Blessing for Community Service 2 min
Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu la'asok b'tzorchay tzibur

4. Budget Update (*Jason Pollard, Karen Wisialowski*) 15 min Inform
 - The Finance Committee is scheduled to hold two more meetings regarding the 2021-22 budget. They are on track to have a budget preview ready to be presented at the March Board meeting.
 - For the current fiscal year, we are projecting a deficit of \$154K, which is considerably better than our budgeted deficit of \$280K. The reasons include: (i) better than expected philanthropic support from congregants and preschool parents; (ii) a grant from the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco to benefit the preschool; and (iii) the fact that our initial \$490K PPP loan will be completely forgiven.
 - Jason and Karen announced that PTS has successfully secured a second \$490K PPP loan from Bank of San Francisco. Jon thanked Karen for working to secure the PPP loan so quickly.
 - Although the second PPP loan will give us breathing room and options for next year's budget and beyond, we need to plan strategically for the future to anticipate what our "new normal" will look like post-pandemic.
 - Karen asked for Trustee feedback on the financial "scorecard" she has been producing for the Board packets.

5. COVID-19 Task Force Update (*Laurie Friedman, Rabbi Feder*) 15 min Inform

- Laurie reported that the COVID-19 task force is continuing to work on a matrix that organizes all decisions that need to be made as we shift from tier to tier in the state's COVID risk assessment system. The task force is also working on a narrative to help congregants understand PTS's approach to COVID-19 risks. Laurie thanked Marilyn for her help in drafting the narrative.
- Rabbi Feder emphasized that PTS's number one concern is the health of our community. Our number two priority is the quality of the services and programs we offer. If we believe that because of health restrictions, a particular program can be offered at a higher quality over Zoom than in person, we will continue to offer that program over Zoom. That is why, for example, we are continuing to conduct B'nai Mitzvah and Kabbalat Shabbat services over Zoom.
- Laurie noted that on February 22, San Mateo County vaccine eligibility guidelines will expand to include people employed in education and childcare. Karen stated that she and Allison are working with legal counsel to assess whether to require employees to get vaccinated when vaccines become available. Because of legal complexities, they are leaning against requiring vaccination but are instead exploring (i) how they can help employees get vaccinated and (ii) incentives they can offer to employees who get vaccinated.

6. Membership Commitment Levels for 2021-22 (*Jason Pollard, Karen Wisialowski*) 20 min Inform/Discuss

- The Finance Committee, along with Karen, Jon, and the Executive Committee, have been discussing whether PTS should hold its Sustaining Membership Commitment level flat or impose a standard requested increase for 2021-22.
- Prior to last year, PTS typically increased the Sustaining Membership Commitment level by approximately 3-7% each year. Last year, because of concerns about congregants' financial health due to the pandemic, PTS held the Sustaining Membership Commitment level flat at \$3255. Most other congregations in the Bay Area also held their Membership Commitment or dues levels flat last year.
- This year, many local congregations are considering increasing their Membership Commitment or dues by 3-5%, although some may hold levels flat again in light of the continuing pandemic.
- Trustees discussed the pros and cons of increasing Sustaining Membership Commitment versus holding it flat for another year.
- The next step will be for the Finance Committee to weigh in on the Sustaining Membership Commitment level in the context of the entire 2021-22 budget. The Board will then have the opportunity to weigh in again when the budget is presented at the next Board meeting.
- Karen and the Trustees noted that the Board should engage in broader conversations about member retention and alternative Membership Commitment models.

7. Trustee Skills and Needs for 2021-22 (*Jon Herstein*) 15 min Discuss

- Jon informed the Board that the Nominating Committee, under the leadership of Immediate Past President Heidi Schell, has met a few times to identify skills, expertise, and demographics we are looking for in new Trustees. The committee will soon begin having conversations with prospective nominees.
- Jon asked Trustees for their thoughts on the types of candidates the Nominating Committee should be looking for. Trustees indicated that they would like to see candidates who are well-connected within the congregation, as well as those who have skills and experience in philanthropy.

8. URJ Benchmarking and Assessment Project (*Jon Herstein*) 15 min Inform/Discuss

- Jon recommended that PTS participate in a Benchmarking and Assessment Project that the URJ has been running for the past 5-6 years. The project provides participating congregations with a set of tools that allow them to benchmark themselves against other congregations of similar size. The assessment has three components: a Congregational Survey; a Financial/Operating Data Benchmarking Tool; and a Board Self-Assessment Reflection.

Congregations can choose to participate in any or all of these components. The URJ does the work of sending out the Congregational Survey and collecting the responses. They also aggregate and guide congregations through the assessment results.

- Trustees expressed support for participating in the project. However, they noted the importance of communicating with congregants about actionable steps that will be taken in response to the results. They also expressed concern about “survey fatigue” and noted that in addition to the survey, we might consider small, facilitated focus groups over Zoom.

9. Board Retreat (*Jon Herstein*) 10 min Inform/Discuss

- Jon announced that Rabbi Lou Feldstein will be facilitating our Board retreat.
- The first part of the retreat will be held on Sunday, February 28 and will focus on (i) helping Trustees get to know one another; and (ii) Board roles and responsibilities. The second part will be held on Sunday, April 18 and will focus on visioning.

10. Governance (*Andy Oliff, Alison Poggi León, Eric Schlezinger*) 3 min Inform/Vote

Motion: To elect Jon Herstein as President of Peninsula Temple Sholom for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2022.

Background: Article VII, Section 2(a) of the PTS Bylaws provides as follows: “At the January meeting of the Trustees, the Trustees shall elect a committee of three (3) Trustees who shall nominate a Trustee for the position of President. At the February meeting of the Trustees, the committee shall present their nominee. Other nominations may be made from the floor. The Trustees shall then elect a President. The newly elected President shall take office at the beginning of the ensuing fiscal year.”

- Andy made the motion. Eric seconded.
- Motion passed.

11. Board Packet Q&A 10 min Discuss

- Karen called Trustees’ attention to the fact that PTS administrative assistant Shelly Smith recently joined the synagogue.
- Trustees asked about how PTS has acquired new members during the pandemic. Karen replied that just as it was before the pandemic, PTS’s member recruitment during the pandemic has been reactive. Almost all new members (other than preschool families) are actively shopping for a synagogue and reach out to PTS through the website.
- Announcements:
 - Ware reminded Trustees about the Board-led Shabbat service to be held on March 5. The theme of the service will be “HIAS Refugee Shabbat,” and the clergy will do a blessing for the Board.
 - Karen announced that on Sunday, March 7, psychologist and HUC lecturer Dr. Betsy Stone will speak to the congregation about the psychology of COVID.

12. Consent Agenda 2 min Vote
Includes last month’s Board minutes, approval of new members, and approval of any administrative resignations.

- Consent agenda approved.

13. Concluding Prayer

2 min

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 pm.