

Board of Trustees Meeting
March 17, 2021
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
Jason Pollard

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

Absent

Ware Kuschner

Staff

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

Guest

Heidi Schell

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

1. Welcome (*Jon Herstein*)

2. D'var Torah (*Gene Podkaminer*)

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. Nominating Committee Report (*Heidi Schell*)

Inform

- Heidi thanked the members of the Nominating Committee -- Linda Citron, Roger Lazarus, Betsy Rosen, Davina Chall, Michael Fried, and Roberta Friedeberg – for their engagement in the nominating process.
- Heidi noted that the Nominating Committee succeeded in achieving three important goals: (1) they fostered connections, both among the committee members and between the committee and the PTS community; (2) they connected with and learned about potential leaders within the congregation; and (3) they recruited two new Trustees to join the Board for 2021-22: Marsha Begun and Joel Silk.
- Heidi shared some background information about Marsha and Joel, and noted that together, they bring to the Board experience in member engagement and strategic planning; demonstrated leadership ability; demonstrated commitment to PTS's vision, mission, and values; representation for preschool families and members 55 years of age and older; and a track record of being "doers" who will roll up their sleeves and get to work.
- Heidi noted the following lessons learned during the nominating process:
 - The practice of conducting outreach conversations with PTS members before extending invitations to join the Board was fundamental to the Nominating Committee's success, both this year and last. Through these conversations, the committee learned about the interests of future leaders who we can begin to

engage in committee work.

- Although the Board provided helpful guidance to the Nominating Committee regarding characteristics to look for in new Trustees, it would be better in the future for the Board to provide that guidance earlier in the nominating process.
- Board orientation for new Trustees is very important.
- PTS must build a pipeline of leadership. Reaching out to potential leaders once per year during the nominating process is not enough. The Board should find a way to institutionalize and systematize the outreach process and involve the entire Board in leadership development by, for example, reintroducing the practice of Trustee “coffee chats” with congregants.

5. Insurance Overview (*Karen Wisialowski*)

Inform/Discuss

- Following up on a discussion from the Board retreat, Karen shared an overview of PTS's insurance coverage and responded to Trustee questions.

6. COVID-19 Task Force Update (*Karen Wisialowski, Laurie Friedman*)

Inform/Discuss

- Karen discussed the letter she sent to the congregation following San Mateo County's recent transition from the red tier to the less-restrictive orange tier in the state's COVID hierarchy. The responses she received from congregants demonstrate the value of sending out messages that react quickly to current news. In general, congregants are pleased with PTS's cautious approach to reopening, although some expressed disappointment that we are not reopening more quickly.
- As San Mateo County continues to move into less restrictive tiers and vaccination rates increase, PTS's staff is considering the following:
 - When and how staff can return to the building;
 - How to balance virtual and in-person elements for this year's High Holy Days; and
 - What other types of hybrid programming will be offered in the fall and what they will look like.
- Trustees noted that it would be nice to get congregant feedback on the reopening process. Trustees recognized, however, that reopening decisions cannot be based on popular demand, but must be based on health needs and on the quality of experience that can be offered.
- Rabbi Feder noted that PTS's current approach to the pandemic is consistent with that of the majority of other Reform congregations around the country.

7. Budget Update and Presentation (*Jason Pollard, Karen Wisialowski*)

Inform/Discuss

- Jason began his presentation with an overview of PTS's financial situation for the current fiscal year (ending June 30, 2021). He noted that (i) preschool and youth education revenues are down considerably because both programs have only about 2/3 of their normal enrollments; (ii) Membership Commitment and High Holy Day appeal receipts are higher than budgeted, although they are less than in prior years; (iii) PTS has received two \$490K Payroll Protection Plan (“PPP”) loans, the first of which already has been completely forgiven; and (iv) because of the PPP loans, we are expecting to add \$206K more to the Operating Reserve fund at end of this fiscal year than originally budgeted despite recording an operating deficit.
- Jason compared this year's projected financial results with the results of the past two years to demonstrate the effect of COVID on PTS's finances.
- Jason highlighted the following features of the Finance Committee's preliminary budget for next year:
 - The committee assumed that the preschool will operate at 80% of capacity next year.
 - The committee budgeted for an increase in High Holy Day appeal fundraising over this year's budget (flat versus this year's actual High Holy Day appeal receipts).
 - The budget anticipates increased personnel costs, due in part to: (i) the anticipated opening of a new

preschool classroom and the consequent hiring of a new preschool teacher; and (ii) a return to regular salaries after this year's COVID-related pay cuts.

- o In addition, the Finance Committee recommends (and included in its preliminary budget) the following measures:
 - An increase of \$180 in the sustaining Membership Commitment level (our requested amount);
 - A Board-sponsored fundraiser that will yield \$50K; and
 - The hiring of a new Director of Family and Youth Engagement.
 - The Board discussed the pros and cons of the Finance Committee recommendations and agreed that (i) the sustaining Membership Commitment level should be increased by \$180, and (ii) the Board should commit to raising funds next year, but in an amount less than \$50K.
 - Jason noted that beyond next year, PTS faces a structural problem that must be addressed: the fact that even if preschool revenue returns to its previous level, it will eventually flatten as the school reaches capacity, while personnel costs (and possibly security costs) will continue to rise. The Finance Committee recommends that the Board create a strategic planning committee to address this problem as soon as possible.
8. Director of Family and Youth Engagement (*Rabbi Liora Alban*) Inform/Discuss/Vote

Motion: To approve the hiring of a new Director of Family and Youth Engagement. The reintroduction of a person in this role as envisioned represents an increase of \$35,000-\$40,000 to the budget compared with the 2020-21 Approved Budget, but a decrease of approximately \$15,000 compared to the 2019-20 budget.

Background:

After the then-director of youth engagement voluntarily left PTS to go back to school for a master's degree in spring 2020, the Board of Trustees imposed a COVID-inspired hiring freeze such that this position was left empty. Rabbis Feder and Alban believe that the lack of a person in this role has hindered PTS's ability to engage youth and families this year. This motion proposes adding back a director level position, and eliminating an administrative assistant position to create a partial source of funding. At the March Board meeting, Rabbi Alban will present her perspective on the Youth Education program and the value of this position, especially this year.

This motion is being presented in March, even before the final approval of the 2021-22 budget, because the hiring window for qualified candidates is now. If we wait until mid-April to begin the process and/or make offers, we will likely lose access to the best candidates.

- Jason made the motion. Eric seconded.
- Discussion:
 - o Rabbi Alban described the values to which PTS's Youth Education program is committed: (1) living Jewishly; (2) relationship building; (3) parent involvement; (4) student empowerment as a means to build Jewish identity; (5) Hebrew language; and (6) building a strong moral foundation.
 - o Rabbi Alban noted that a Director of Family and Youth Engagement would uphold and strengthen our achievement of these values by doing the following: (1) supporting and advancing the education of madrichim; (2) offering more supplemental programming, including Bistro Shalom, grade-level family learning opportunities, experiential learning, and field trips; (3) contributing to student empowerment, Jewish living, and the building of a strong moral foundation by working with our youth group; (4) reaching out to and engaging with families to increase youth education enrollment; and (5) giving Rabbi Alban more time to devote to curriculum development.
 - o In order to save money, Rabbi Alban proposes to combine the position of Director of Family and Youth

Engagement with the role of the youth education program's administrative assistant.

- Motion passed.

9. Board Packet Q&A

Discuss

- Arlene called Trustees' attention to the revised employee handbook that will be voted on at next month's Board meeting. Karen requested that Trustees who have questions about the revisions reach out to her at least 10-14 days before the meeting to give her time to obtain answers.
- Arlene noted that the Annual Meeting date of May 23 may be changed to allow more time to collect feedback on the proposed bylaws.

10. Consent Agenda

Vote

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

- Consent agenda passed

11. Concluding Prayer

Meeting adjourned at 8:47pm.