

TEMPLE SINAI BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING –January 18, 2023

Present [meeting conducted in person and on Zoom]: Michael Baratz, Lori Berman, Naomi Camper, Dora Chen, Glenn Engelmann, Larry Freedman, Nancy Golding, Cathy Goldwyn, Ken Jaffe, Katie Joselow, Dan Koch, Audrey Kramer, Ariel Levinson-Waldman, Deborah Lewis, Myron Marlin, Howard Oppenheim, Jonah Perlin, Catherine Ribnick, Steve Sacks, Marcie Solomon, Seth Speyer, Laura Steel, Anita Stoll, Michael Sussmann, D. Jean Veta, Regina Ziegler, Senior Rabbi Jonathan Roos, Rabbi Hannah Goldstein, Rabbi Noah Diamondstein, Cantor Laura Croen, Cantor Educator Rebecca Robins, Director of Early Childhood Education Ali Hurewitz, and Executive Director Ellen Agler.

Call to order: With a quorum of the Board members present, the meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m. by Temple Sinai President Marcie Solomon.

D’var Torah: Howard Oppenheim delivered the D’var.

BOARD OPERATIONS AND GENERAL BUSINESS:

- **Board Meeting minutes:** The December 2022 Board Meeting minutes and the Special December Board Meeting minutes were approved.
- **Membership report:** The December 2022 membership report was approved.
- **Financial report:** Ken Jaffe presented a summary of the written Year-to-Date Financial Summary (as of 12/31/2022) for the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year and advised that the current projection is for a year-end favorable variance to budget of \$12,184. If this holds, the proposed Surplus Fund transfer (currently set at \$416,463 to balance the budget) can be reduced. Member commitment income is behind last year's collections through December and we are tentatively projecting a 2% shortfall. Investment Income (interest earned on our cash reserves) is higher than budgeted due to higher interest rates. “Other Income” is higher than projected due to online payment processing fees, which are offset by expenses in the Administration line. Due to lower than projected enrollments, Nursery School tuition revenue is trending below budget, offset partially but not completely, by reduced expenses. Expenses are in line with budget with the exception of security, which is higher due to higher levels of activity in the building this year.
- **Senior Cantor Transition:** Rabbi Roos extended heartfelt thanks to Cantor Search Committee Chair Anita Stoll and provided an update regarding the transition of incoming Senior Cantor, Rachel Rhodes. Subject to congregational approval at the May meeting, Cantor Rhodes is expected to join the Temple starting on July 15, 2023. The

clergy team has started and will continue to have conversations with Cantor Rhodes to plan for the High Holy Days, allowing her sufficient opportunity to fulfill her commitments to her current synagogue. In April, we will assemble a Transition Committee to provide resources for her transition and to plan on-boarding and ‘meet-and-greet’ events.

- **Membership Growth Committee:** Michael Sussmann outlined the results of the recent work of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Membership Growth and there was extensive discussion about four primary areas of focus: 1) communications; 2) modernization of the Temple’s dues structure; 3) engagement of Nursery School and families with young children; and 4) membership retention. The Committee is recommending that aspects of these four key areas should be addressed through the Temple’s Strategic Plan and the Committee provided a very comprehensive and detailed 35-page draft memorandum for the Board’s informational and discussion purposes.

In its report, the Committee outlined a variety of ideas for possible consideration. As to the first category – communications – potential undertakings could include: creation of an external communications staff position; preparation of a comprehensive FAQ for prospective members; improvement of Temple Sinai’s social media presence; and updating the Temple website. As to the second issue – the dues structure – consideration could be given to changing Temple Sinai’s dues model, which could include: reducing the current pledge form to one page and making it more graphically engaging; simplifying cost categories, e.g., rolling voluntary contributions and building maintenance fund into recommended contribution levels; eliminating from the dues form the request for contributions to the Annual Fund (substituting a separate communication at a different time of the year regarding the Annual Fund); considering a tiered model with a suggestion that members contribute to some extent and proportionate to their ability to give; reducing fees for engagement of younger members; reducing fees to retain senior congregants; and revising the nomenclature. With regard to the third issue – meeting the needs of families with young children – the Committee suggested: the possibility of hiring a 0-5 Year Old Family Coordinator; improving Temple Sinai’s online presence for families with young children; building community for member and pre-member families; creating more member-to-member (and member-to-nonmember) connections; and allowing new Nursery School families to be members for a nominal or reduced fee so long as their children remain in the Nursery School. As to the fourth category – member retention – options included: conducting a survey of member households; assessing procedures for welcoming new members; continuing to provide new member bags; increasing the number of new member receptions; creating welcoming groups for new members; creating listserv/email chain for new members; modifying the role of the existing membership committee; creating Temple “ambassadors” to meet with new members at services, events, and programs; creating procedures/content for discussion with prospective members; and reviewing the current roles of clergy and staff in membership acquisition

and member on-boarding. There was also discussion about the options to encourage continued engagement of families of post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah and post-confirmation students.

UPDATES AND DISCUSSIONS:

- **Renovation and Expansion:** Ken Jaffe provided an update on the Temple's renovation and expansion. This month, we made further progress on the foundation for the South Addition and related underground work in preparation for structural steel that will frame the addition to be erected later in January. The temple project team, architects and contractors are working closely together to keep the project moving forward, to try to recover lost time on the schedule, and to contain costs where possible.
- **Capital Campaign:** Naomi Camper gave an updated report about fundraising. Activities are continuing to try to again raise the visibility of the Campaign, including planned future sessions to provide updates. She reported that many members have fulfilled and/or extended their pledges, with many congregants deciding to direct gifts to the Annual Fund.
- **Nominating Committee:** Past President Deborah Lewis provided an update on the Nominating Committee, which has recently met and has articulated a goal of increasing diversity (defined broadly). She encouraged Board members to submit names of possible nominees for board and committee positions.

REPORTS:

- **President's Report** – as submitted.
- **Senior Rabbi's Report and Clergy Report** – Rabbi Roos gave an oral report, highlighting that the Temple will be celebrating retiring Senior Cantor Laura Croen with four upcoming events and programs. Additionally, two Zoom conference calls are scheduled to allow Board members to discuss the Israel Committee and its mission statement. Rabbi Diamondstein is spearheading a newly formed self-selected group to respond – both in a proactive and reactive way – to the rise of anti-Semitism, including through education, programming and collaborating with other organizations. Rabbi Goldstein outlined two upcoming reproductive rights programs. Mazel tov to Rabbi Goldstein and her husband Josh Friedman who are expecting twins in June and congratulations to Rabbi Diamondstein and his wife Marnie who are expecting a baby girl in July. Rabbi Roos announced that the Temple is fortunate to have Rabbi Stephanie Bernstein join us on a part-time basis from mid-April through the High Holidays while our other rabbis are on leave.
- **Executive Director's Report** – as submitted.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Confidential personnel matters were discussed in Executive Session.

OTHER BUSINESS: Upon conclusion of the Executive Session, the Board unanimously voted to recommend that the Congregation approve the proposed contract with Cantor Rachel Rhodes.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Laura Steel, Secretary