

TEMPLE SINAI BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING – March 20, 2024

Present [meeting conducted in person and on Zoom]: Naomi Camper, Dora Chen, Glenn Engelmann, Larry Freedman, Cathy Goldwyn, Sally Greenberg, Ken Jaffe, Katie Joselow, Dan Koch, Laura Kolton, Sam Lehman, Myron Marlin, Anthony Murphy, Howard Oppenheim, Aaron Panner, Jonah Perlin, Catherine Ribnick, Sara Rosenblum, Dolores Siegel, Seth Speyer, Laura Steel, Michael Sussmann, D. Jean Veta, Senior Rabbi Jonathan Roos, Senior Cantor Rachel Rhodes, Executive Director Ellen Agler, and Director of Early Childhood Education Ali Hurewitz.

Call to order: With a quorum of the Board members present, the meeting was called to order at 7:36 p.m. by Temple Sinai President Ken Jaffe.

D’var Torah: Cathy Goldwyn delivered the D’var Torah.

BOARD OPERATIONS AND GENERAL BUSINESS:

- **Board Meeting minutes:** The February 2024 Board Meeting minutes (as amended) were approved.
- **Membership report:** The February 2024 membership report was approved.
- **Financial report:** EVP and Chair of the Finance Committee, Glenn Engelmann, presented a summary of the written Year-to-Date Financial Summary for the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year. Glenn advised that it continues to be encouraging as the Temple’s financial picture is still trending positive compared to budget. Member commitments are trending ahead of budget, while expenses are trending below budget. In addition, we also just received a second D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) grant in excess of \$100,000 (the second of four installments) and we expect extra revenue from the Nursery School’s Summer Program. Glenn provided an update regarding the preparation of the FY 2025 Budget, which is expected to be presented to the Board next month. In response to questions, he stated that the Finance Committee also was focused on assessing longer- term financial issues as the Board continues its work towards assuring the Temple’s continued financial health. Executive Director Ellen Agler highlighted the “members at risk” section of the Financial Summary report, reflecting a very low number of member households who have not been engaged financially or otherwise last year or so far this year. She acknowledged our Membership and Engagement Coordinator Karen Auerbach and Director of Finance Andrei Israel for their focused efforts to track and follow-up with members who are in arrears.
- **Sinai House Annual Report:** Sinai House Board President Amy Schear summarized the Sinai House Annual report covering the previous fiscal year from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023. The Sinai House Board has recently hired a new Executive Director, Renetta Armstrong, who has been exploring changes to the Sinai House Program to better

reflect the current environment in D.C. and the needs of our residents. In addition, a special committee of the Sinai House Board reviewed the research, suggested next steps, and has proposed a partnership with The Generation Hope Scholar Program, which is designed to help young parents achieve their college dreams. The Program provides mentoring, tuition assistance, a peer community, and other wrap-around services to help residents earn their degrees, with housing and additional services to be provided by Sinai House. The Board will be voting on whether to explore an MOU and will closely monitor this approach to ensure that any adjustments are successful to Sinai House's mission and program. In addition, Sinai House's Communication Committee has suggested a refresh of the website (which should go live this Spring) and an increased use of social media. Additional updates included in the Report are: the hiring of a New Financial Navigator to help residents change their behavior with money; a contract with NEST DC to provide property management to handle water issues and other problems; the engagement of a new security company, Kastle Systems, to help better address recent incidents of intimate partner violence; the participation of current residents and active alumni in a five-week Empowerment Therapy Program; the Homes & Hearts Shabbat Service on November 17, 2023, with remarks by D.C. Council Member Matt Frumin and Sinai House Executive Director Renetta Armstrong; the Holiday Party held on December 9, 2023; and the upcoming Tricia Davis 5K, which is a major source of revenue. Upon vote, the Temple Sinai Board approved the slate of proposed Sinai House Officers and Board of Directors.

- **CIESJ Proposed Resolution for Renaming Fund and Increasing Voluntary Contribution:** Ken Jaffe explained that The Committee for Israel Engagement and Social Justice has requested that the Temple Board approve a proposed Resolution to a) change the name of the Dollars for Israel Fund to the "Israel Engagement and Social Justice Fund" and b) increase the amount listed in the annual dues request for voluntary donation to this fund from \$18 to \$36. After discussion, the proposed Resolution was approved by the Board upon motion and vote.
- **Gift Agreement Policy:** There was a brief discussion about the proposed revised Gift Agreement Policy, and we extend our thanks to Dianne Rudo and Noah Benjamin for spearheading the development of a revised policy to ensure that both donors and Temple Sinai have a shared understanding of the parameters for gifts, and to allow uniform handling of all gifts. The revised Gift Acceptance Policy is designed to serve as a guideline to Temple Sinai staff and lay leaders involved with accepting gifts, to outside advisors who assist in the gift planning process, and to prospective donors. Thanks also to Seth Speyer for lending his expertise to the proposed policy, which will be discussed again, and voted upon, at a future board meeting.

UPDATES AND DISCUSSION:

- **Renovation and Expansion:** Ken Jaffe provided an update on the Temple's renovation and expansion. Based on the progress to date, we are 'in the home stretch,' with furniture delivery scheduled for next week. At present, we hope to obtain a Conditional Certificate of Occupancy and to start using the new Addition in early April 2024.
- **Student Cantor Update:** Cantor Rhodes gave an update on the engagement of a Student Cantor. After conducting seven interviews, we have been matched with a fifth-year student, Gabriel Lehrman, who has extensive relevant experience. We are excited to welcome him to Temple Sinai.
- **Member Meeting on Loan and Temple Finances:** Ken Jaffe and Glenn Engelmann discussed the agenda for an upcoming member meeting in advance of the May Congregational meeting that is designed to provide background regarding the R&E project, an overview of the Capital Campaign, the progress of construction, the need for construction financing, the proposed terms for the financing, and the likely impact on the synagogue's financial picture and the 5-year forecast. We hope to provide an information session for members to explain the financial considerations, to answer questions, and to facilitate the annual meeting. The Member Meeting is scheduled for April 4, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., and a congregation-wide announcement will follow.

REPORTS:

- **President's Report** – as submitted orally. Ken also underscored the importance of having Board members sign up and serve as representatives at Shabbat services.
- **Senior Rabbi's Report** –Rabbi Roos provided an oral report, highlighting the following:
 - a) Deborah Gordis, our social worker who has been on staff for five months, will increase her hours from 15 to 25 hours per month thanks to additional funding. She has led a grief support group and two staff trainings, and she also provides 1:1 consultations with Temple members and staff, as needed, to provide support in the pastoral care area. Deb will be continuing with us for next year in a similar capacity;
 - b) We have selected a new machzor, *Mishkan Ha'nefesh*, which we will start using this Rosh Hashanah to replace our current machzor, *Gates of Repentance*. The choice was made through the work of a task force, chaired by Laura Steel, and including Rabbi Jonathan Roos, Cantor Rachel Rhodes, Eric Bord, Darcy Hirsh, Seth Tievsky, Rebecca Waldman, and Gail Wides. We are finalizing the details of a donation to fund the purchase of sufficient copies for our sanctuary services, and a congregation-wide announcement will follow, along with opportunities to learn about and "meet" this machzor in the coming weeks;
 - c) Purim is this weekend, and we will hold multiple celebrations with Saturday night services, a carnival, a Nursery School parade and school celebrations;
 - d) we have assigned all of the January 2026-June 2027 B'nei Mitzvah services (while reducing the number of mincha services);
 - d) we will be

commemorating Yom HaShoah with a trip to the Holocaust Museum for a group tour, program, and opportunity for memorial reflection in the Hall of Remembrance (rather than a service on site at Temple Sinai as we have done for the past several years); and e) the upcoming Passover Seder (on the second night) will be held at Temple Sinai with Rabbi Roos and Cantor Rhodes leading.

A supplemental senior clergy report was provided by Cantor Rhodes who advises that we will be adding a healing service component to certain Friday night Shabbat services (in lieu of a sermon) several times a year, We are also bringing guest artist Jason Mesches to Temple over the weekend of December 6-8, 2023, with support from the Speyer Music Fund, and we will be having performances from the teen, youth, adult and pop-up' choirs.

Director of Early Childhood Education Ali Hurewitz provided an update regarding Mini Mitzvah Day, which was a huge success in engaging families with young children. More than one hundred families came to participate in, and support, the work of six non-profit organizations.

- **Executive Director's Report** – as submitted.

OTHER BUSINESS:

- Thanks to Michael Sussmann for reminding all Board members to update their biographies on the Temple Sinai website.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Confidential and personnel matters were discussed in Executive Session with an opportunity for questions and discussion.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 10:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Laura Steel, Secretary