

**JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST CONGREGATION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING  
October 11, 2023**

**Board Members Present:** David Block, Robin Byster, Edie Canter, Marie Davidson, Emily Harris, Nancy Katz, Gail Luxenberg, Andrew Segall, Hannah Shearn, Chai Wolfman

**Staff Present:** Rabbi Rachel Weiss, Cantor Howard Friedland, Executive Director Micky Baer

- I. **Welcome, Agenda, and Call to Order – Hannah Shearn.** The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m.
- II. **Blessing/Covenant of Kavod Sichá – Board.**
- III. **D'Var Torah – Nancy Katz**
- IV. **Report from the JRC Foundation – Ralph Segall.** Ralph presented the JRC Foundation's annual report to the Board. He explained that since 1987, the Foundation has held and managed an investment fund and endowment on behalf of the congregation. Unlike the congregational Board, which is responsible for the immediate revenues and expenditures of the congregation, the Foundation Board takes a long-term view. Their goal is to provide a sustainable program of grant giving to the JRC congregation.

The Foundation is a separate entity from the JRC congregation, with its own tax ID and Board. It is linked to the congregation through the Foundation's governance. Three of the five Foundation Board members also sit on the JRC Board. They include the JRC Board President, the JRC Board Treasurer and the Immediate Past-President/President Elect of the JRC Board. The other two Foundation Board members are At-Large Directors, who must be JRC members in good standing. They have staggered three-year terms and are appointed by the JRC Board President, with the approval of the JRC congregation's Board. The current Foundation Board members include Hannah Shearn, Emily Harris, David Block, Neil Rubin, and Ralph Segall.

The Foundation Board elects officers and has adopted an Investment and Spending Policy. This policy provides asset allocation ranges for investments and determines the amount of the grants each year. The Foundation Board also determines which funds under its control will be subject to the general Spending Policy and which are subject to a separate policy.

The Spending policy provides grants to JRC using the following formula: grants are determined on a base equal to the 3-year moving average of the fund's value on a rate equal to the Consumer Price Index for the last year, subject to a floor of 3.5% and a

ceiling of 6%. There are four funds managed by the Foundation that are subject to this policy: The Unrestricted Fund, the Early Childhood Fund the Giza and Meyer Smith Scholarship Fund, and the Rabbinic Endowment Fund. Two funds managed by the Foundation that are not subject to the spending policy are the Ronna Farber Sanders Fund and the Building Reserve Fund. The amounts of grants from these funds are determined by the Foundation Board.

Since inception, the Foundation has received approximately \$3,559,834 in contributions, and has had investment revenues of \$1,505,359, totaling \$5,065,193. The Foundation has made grants of \$4,318,611, the majority of those grants have been towards retiring the mortgage as part of our recent Capital Campaign, Pillars of Chai. About \$743,316 remains invested by the Foundation.

In response to questions, Ralph clarified that the Foundation met the IRS spending guidelines of making grants of at least 5% of total assets annually, although as the Foundation is controlled by a religious organization, JRC, it does not have to file an IRS 990 form, where the 5% rule is tested. He also explained that other than the capital campaign to pay off the JRC building, the Foundation has not had a campaign to bring in more funds to the Foundation. He believes that JRC should develop a larger endowment to fund operations and building needs.

- V. **Minutes from 9/13/2023 – Nancy Katz.** Motion to approve the 9/13/2023 minutes. Motion by Edie, second by Nancy. Vote: 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention. **Motion passed.**
  
- VI. **Executive Director’s Report – Micky Baer.** Micky reported that membership numbers are higher this year than last year at this time, although comparison is somewhat difficult with the High Holidays being earlier this year. We have given more adjustments in membership dues this year than last year, but we are still within the amount we have budgeted for adjustments. As for members who have not renewed, 12 plan to renew but have not done so yet, and 12 have not yet let us know their plans. If everyone paid their committed membership amounts, we are \$32,864 away from making our FY24 budget for membership. (Correction 11/5/23 - due to an Excel error we are actually around \$55,000 away from our FY24 membership revenue.)

Our Kehillah enrollment numbers are like those of last year at this time. We have 10 enrolled in pre-k which was not a class that ran last year and is promising for next year and continued growth at our youngest age levels, We have 5 adult tot pairs on Saturday, that class is co-sponsored by jBaby Chicago. Families that are enrolled in our early childhood level classes are not required to be members of JRC to attend, as a continuation of our policy of automatic membership for families only enrolled in our Early Childhood programs. We hope these families see JRC as a place for community and stay and become members.

We will not have early childhood revenues this year, unlike last year. Kehillah revenues are lower this year than last because – because last year we received a grant. However, we in line with our FY24 budget expectations.

Regarding staffing, Kevin Lowry is our part-time facilities manager and Micky is happy with his work to date. Anna Casanova is our new business assistant, and Troi Roberson is our new full time marketing staff. The onboarding of both, which is necessary for their success and retention, requires substantial time from Micky. A facilities event staff position has been posted and there are some good candidates. As we continue to staff up, Reese and Sandy are helping to fill greater roles with volunteer members. Gail offered to screen resumes for Micky.

#### **VII. Anti-Racism Task Force Report Action Steps- Hannah Shearn.**

Hannah reported that she, Nancy, Rick and two additional non-Board JRC members are working on updating the JRC Community Covenant to include a covenant against harassment. Currently there is a policy in the personnel handbook, that Micky is working to update, but we do not have a member-to-member anti-harassment policy in place. Micky also is going to refresh and build out our Tikkun Olam section on our JRC web site. Anne Wildman soon will be sending us information on a Board learning session with Rabbi Sandra Lawson. Anne and Rabbi Rachel will be working with Rabbi Sandra to provide background on JRC's anti-racism work and our ideas of what we may want her to focus on.

#### **VIII. Consent Agenda – Rabbi, Cantor and Board Members.**

Rabbi Rachel remarked that this has been an intense time. It was a remarkable High Holiday season. So many people from JRC were involved in making the High Holidays an extraordinary experience, from the shleppers to the ritual creators. She has been delighted to work with Lauren Reeves, our Education Director. She described her as a wonderful thought partner, with wisdom and presence, and with great ideas for Kehillah and curriculum. The Rabbi and Howard were looking forward to a period of relative quiet after the Holidays, but the Hamas attack on Israel which occurred on October 7, initiated a very tense, traumatic, and emotional time. The Rabbi has received a lot of support and has been proud of the way JRC members have been able to share with each other and discuss the Israel/Palestine situation in a nuanced and thoughtful way.

Cantor Howard echoed the words of Rabbi Rachel. The last four days has felt like four weeks, given the intensity of emotions. He credited Rabbi Rachel with navigating the waters in a compassionate and thoughtful way. He thanked everyone for stepping up in many ways, which has made him hopeful despite the terrible circumstances.

Rick Kulp reported on the Member Survey results. He and other Board members, including Chai and Emily, are combing through the survey results, with Chai and Rick looking at them from a marketing standpoint, and Emily from a programming standpoint. The Board discussed whether the High Holiday phone calls to members were a worthwhile way to communicate with members. Most Board members felt that the calls were important. Some commented on how surprised they were that members answered the phone and were eager to talk, or that they texted back after receiving texts. The Cantor remarked that there is a pastoral aspect to the calls as well. In addition to highlighting personal issues for Board members to address with members, he and the Rabbi called members before Yizkor who had close and personal losses, and since the beginning of this week, he and the Rabbi have called everyone they knew who have family in Israel. One member described the calls as a differentiating feature of JRC.

In her VP of Education Report, Robin lauded the phenomenal job Lauren Reeves has been doing. She speaks to Lauren weekly, if not more frequently. Lauren and she are working to increase meaningful parent engagement. She gave an example of a member who took it upon herself to organize a park gathering for kids of different grades to get to know each other. She also reported that she has two members who are working on rejuvenating our JRC library.

The VP of Development, Gail, reported that the Gala committee is well organized and working, although they have not yet found a member to chair the committee. She is working with Reese and Robin Trilling to find a chair. Joel Gratch has volunteered to head the Phonathon again this year, and Gail and Edie will work with him. Gail also is working on initiating a planned giving campaign. She met with Jerry Israelite and Jonathan Markowitz, who agreed to assist in implementing the campaign. Edie, in addition to working on the Phonathon and the planned giving campaign is looking at ways to increase giving from midlevel donors.

Marie reported that the Dream and Plan programming team is working on developing programs for the January to May 2024 period. They have ideas and are seeking additional ideas, particularly on how to reach young people and seniors. She also recounted her appreciation of the many people who assisted with the High Holidays this year. She felt that we were much better organized for the High Holidays than we were the prior year.

A motion was made to approve the consent agenda. Motion by Nancy, second by Andrew. Vote: 9 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions. **Motion Passed.**

#### **IX. Upcoming Meetings and Tasks – Hannah.**

Hannah reminded members to sign up for gift giving, D'var, snacks and Zoom gabbai slots for Board meetings. Our next scheduled Board meeting is November 8, 2023, at JRC at 7:30 pm.

- X. **Yasher Koach.** Considering the late start of tonight’s meeting, Hannah asked Board members to fill out the FY2024 Yasher Koach google document in lieu of making oral reports.
- XI. **Good and Welfare.** Matters were discussed.
- XII. **Executive Session.** Matters were discussed.
- XIII. **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:14 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Katz  
Board Secretary