

**JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST CONGREGATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
November 8, 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 7:30 p.m.
- II. **Blessing/Covenant of Kavod Sicha – Board.**
- III. **D'Var Torah – Emily Harris**
- IV. **Israel/Palestine Working Group Statement Motion – Emily.** Emily explained that since the Board met on November 1, 2023, the workgroup met several times and had numerous email communications. They took to heart the recommendations and feedback they received from the Board and congregants. Based on the feedback, they changed the title of the statement and integrated their introductory memorandum into a preamble to the statement. They also carefully considered the disparate feedback they received about the word “ceasefire” in the statement. They strongly felt that coming to consensus about a statement that JRC could issue that would show that a synagogue can disagree and yet speak our truths and live our values. In their final recommended statement, the workgroup did not use the word “ceasefire;” they called for “an immediate stop to the killing and for immediate release of all hostages.”

The Board considered discussed the Israel/Palestine Working Group Statement as well as numerous comments and communications from membership. In addition, a group of college students who are members but did not have an opportunity to have their voices heard sent letters to the Board, which were read by Jonah Karsh at the meeting. Each Board member had an opportunity to speak. The following is a summary of themes that emerged from the discussion:

- Board members discussed their leanings with respect to using the term “ceasefire” versus “stop the killing.”
- It is important to make a statement that reflects the sense of the “whole” of our community to the extent possible.
- The process of the working group has been inspiring and represents the best of JRC.
- It is important to stress what we have in common rather than what sets us apart.

- Not issuing a statement is a statement in itself.
- We risk losing some members if we issue a statement and we risk losing some members if we do not issue a statement.
- JRC is unique in its ability to have a nuanced conversation about Israel/Palestine.
- Issuing a statement gives us an opportunity to live our values.
- After our former Rabbi left, many felt it was difficult to talk about Israel at JRC. The process of discussion and consensus in formulating this statement has been healing.

Motion was made by Emily to endorse the final statement of the Israel Palestine Working Group, seconded by Rick. Vote: 13 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention. **Motion Passed.**

V. Minutes from 10/11/23 – Nancy Katz. Motion to approve the 9/13/2023 minutes. Motion made by Edie, seconded by Nancy. Vote: 12 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention. **Motion passed.**

VI. Executive Director’s Report – Micky Baer. Micky reported that JRC is in a staffing transition. Regarding facilities’ staff, Brent Frost started last week, and Mike O’Neill and Migel Obance have been stepping up to fill the gaps left since we lost a facilities’ staff member. We also may hire another facilities’ staff member. We have several candidates for Rachel Sherman’s position and Micky is optimistic the position will soon be filled. Onboarding other new staff is also taking a fair amount of Micky’s time from other responsibilities. She thanked Reese for her help in supporting her through this transition.

The Phonathon has just launched, and donations are beginning to come in. Marketing activities are also underway, and the marketing team has new members. Their focus will be on the website, video testimonials and strategy/marketing plan.

Membership continues to grow, and there are potential new members who are likely to join. We have 11 member households we think will renew and we are slightly ahead of where we were last year. Adjustments to dues are nearing budgeted amounts, but we also have households who are paying more than the minimum. All of the “Taste of Kehillah” families joined as members. We lost two families reportedly due to JRC’s response to Israel/Palestine issues. To meet our budget projections, we will need an additional \$55,240, or 17 more households on top of the renewing households. Both Micky and David stressed we need to continue to pursue fundraising and increasing membership.

Micky is working on obtaining projections from Board members regarding next year’s budget. She also reported that she has received a lot of positive feedback and gratitude

from members for our providing outside security for larger events. Kevin Lowry and Micky continue to work on implementing the security grant.

VII. Security Team Hiring Motion – Reese. Reese presented a motion from the Security Team that the Board approve an \$11,000 addition to this year’s budget to cover the costs of security/Evanston Police Department through the month of February 2024, as needed. Micky reported that members generally have expressed to her their support for our extra security efforts. The Board discussed the pros and cons of using private security versus off duty Evanston Police. The team is exploring two potential private sources of security. While private security may be less expensive, we need to be sure that they are well trained in de-escalation, and sensitive to diversity and anti-racism work of JRC. Motion made by Reese, seconded by David. Vote: 14 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions. **Motion passed.**

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

Written reports were included in the Board’s drop box for the meeting. A motion was made by David to pass the Consent Agenda, and seconded by Reese. Vote: 14 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.

X. Yasher Koach – Board. The following members were identified for recognition:

- Marcie Weiss, for agreeing to coordinate greeters at the door for JRC events.
- The entire I/P working group. In addition to the working group, Luke will be helping with I/P programming, and Hanna, Marla Baker, Anne Wildman, and Edie will be assisting with I/P educational programming.
- The entire Board, from Cantor Howard, for our hard work.
- Reese, from Micky, for supporting Rachel Sherman and Micky, and for assisting with staffing issues.
- Stan Cohen, Abby Harris-Ridker, Michael DeHeeger, for creating the statement from the I/P working group, and for Emily for her leadership of the group.
- Mike O’Neill, from Micky, who has stepped up to fill shifts, help train new staff, and handle difficult situations with calm, grace, and maturing.

XI. Good and Welfare. Matters were discussed.

XII. Executive Session. Matters were discussed.

XIII. Budget Amendment – Reese, Board. Reese made the following oral motion: Approve an addition to the FY2024 budget of up to \$7000 in expenses for an assessment and professional development support for the Executive Director and her team. The funds will be used for our Executive Director to work with an outside HR consultant, for funding for staff retreat(s), staff training(s), and/or other team-building opportunities. The consultant will present a summary report and any recommendations to the Governance Team of the board, which is authorized to approve an additional \$7,000 in expenses in FY24 if warranted." Motion made by Reese and seconded by Anne. Vote: 11 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention.

XIV. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Katz
Board Secretary