

**JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST CONGREGATION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING  
March 13, 2024**

**Board Members Present:** Luke Adams, David Block, Robin Byster, Edie Canter, Emily Harris, Nancy Katz, Rick Kulp, Gail Luxenberg, Irv Miller, Andrew Segall, Hannah Shearn, Anne Wildman, Chai Wolfman

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

**Guest:** Debi Lewis and Shari Pergricht

- I. **Welcome, Agenda, and Call to Order – Hannah Shearn.** The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. Gail agreed to be timekeeper.
- II. **Blessing/Covenant of Kavod Sicha – Board.**
- III. **D’Var Torah – Nancy**
- IV. **JRC Website – Rick, Debi Lewis**

Debi Lewis and Rick reported on the addition of an “Our Values” section of the JRC website. Rick stated that this section publicly affirms the values of the JRC community. Debi explained that this section was conceived by the JRC marketing working group who wanted to emphasize that JRC’s values are not just ideas of what we ought to do. The values’ pages show that JRC, as a community, is actively engaged in implementing these values. The message is: “if you want a synagogue that does work (on its values), JRC is for you.” Debi walked the Board through the values pages on the site, explaining the uniform format of each page, and where she got the information that populates the pages.

Debi asked for the Board’s assistance in keeping these pages current. Not only will the values pages direct members to interesting activities, but regular updates to the website will increase the visibility of the JRC website in search engines’ algorithms, which prioritize recently updated pages. Anne offered to send out a form to Tikkun Olam entities to simplify their reporting of updates to Debi for insertion on the web pages. Nancy offered to email Debi after each Board meeting with any updates from the Board. Another member suggested the addition of a tool bar on the values pages that will enhance navigation. It was also suggested that we reach out to committee chairs to encourage them to provide information to Debi.

The Board also discussed the blog portion of the website. Debi encouraged the Board to write interesting and timely blog entries or ask friends to do so. This will also bring

traffic to our website. The Board thanked Debi for her excellent work on the JRC website.

- V. **Minutes from February 14, 2024, Board meeting – Nancy Katz.** Motion to approve the February 14, 2024, minutes. Motion made by Irv, seconded by David. Vote: 12 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention. **Motion passed.**

- VI. **Review of FY25 Proposed Budget – Micky, David**

Micky reviewed the Proposed Budget Report in the Board’s Dropbox file. She explained that in this fiscal year, FY24, we project a \$73,503 deficit between revenues and expenses. The deficit would be even higher if we had a full complement of staff during the full fiscal year. Micky estimated that the deficit this year would be closer to \$100,000 if we had full staffing. The remaining PPP funds will cover the deficit and leave JRC with \$150,408 in PPP funds at the end of this fiscal year.

The FY25 proposed budget includes revenues of \$1,407,981 and expenses of \$1,510,180. The projected FY25 deficit between revenues and expenses, of \$102,199, is very close to this fiscal year’s projected deficit, assuming full staffing. The deficit can be covered with the remaining PPP funds of \$150,408, leaving \$48,209 in PPP funds at the end of FY25.

Micky walked the Board through the detailed information about revenues and expenses in the proposed FY25 budget. Compared to the current year’s budget., overall revenues are up \$48,000. Membership revenues are up \$37,000, including the security donations, Kehillah revenues are up by \$10,000, Adult Education is down by \$9,000 since there is no adult B’nai Mitzvah class in FY25, B’nai Mitzvah revenues are down \$7,000, Fundraising revenue is up by \$12,000 and Endowment revenue is up by \$5,000. Compared to the current year’s budget projections, expenses overall appear up by \$76,000 in the FY25 proposed budget. However, when the figures are adjusted for the one-time gap in office and facilities staff, the increase in expense is \$39,000, which is primarily due to inflation, staff raises, increased event hours, and increased administrative insurance costs.

We are projecting an increase of eight member households in FY25. Micky noted that newer members are requiring higher dues adjustments than returning members. The average adjustment for new members during FY24 has been \$1,473, and \$599 for returning members.

Micky and David stressed that the FY25 budget, with it’s over \$100,000 deficit is not sustainable for JRC, and it is essential that we achieve a more balanced budget. One idea for increasing revenue is renting our space during the week for a preschool or other rentals. Micky is exploring this idea with a commercial realtor. While we are exploring increased fundraising through legacy giving, expectancies such as these cannot be

budgeted. JRC has reserves of \$197,000 with \$65,000 reserved for Board approved spending and \$137,000 additional in reserves, but we hope not to deplete the reserves. Our biggest expenses are staff and facilities, and our staff is stretched thin as it is.

The Board discussed the need to bring in new members and other sources of revenues. We are experiencing demographic shifts, with the near north suburbs losing Jewish population. We are also facing a generational shift: we are moving from members who belonged to generations that thought of the Jewish community as their primary community and philanthropy goals, to a newer generation with less expectation of joining a synagogue, and many charitable options.

The finance committee will be meeting in the next week, and we will continue to explore additional sources of revenues and continue marketing efforts. The Board will be asked to pass a FY25 budget at the April Board meeting.

**VII. Dream and Plan Meeting Update – Robin, Marie.** Robin and Marie reported on the Dream and Plan team brainstorming session. There were several good ideas for programs advanced at the meeting. They will be meeting with Rabbi Rachel and Micky to prepare the calendar for the first part of next fiscal year.

**VIII. High Holiday Tickets for Young Adults Policy Motion – Hannah.** Hannah explained that we have conflicting language in our High Holiday tickets for Young Adults policy and our Membership Categories for Under Age 35 policy. The proposed changes to the High Holiday tickets for Young Adults policy would eliminate the confusing language and make it easier for us to gather contact information for those young adults who attend our High Holiday services (including adult children of current members) so we may communicate with them directly about opportunities for further engagement at JRC and joining JRC as members. She also explained that the High Holiday Guest Ticket form, as currently drafted allows college students to attend at NO CHARGE. We do not want to continue to privilege college students over other young adults of the same age. To simplify our High Holiday Guest ticket form we would JRC staff to remove the language that college students attend at NO CHARGE and instead only offer \$18 High Holiday tickets to all young adults ages 18 to 35.

The Board discussed the proposal. Several Board members felt that JRC households with college students face financial stresses, and a charge for their children to attend High Holiday services, while modest, could generate bad feelings. Hannah accepted a friendly amendment to her motion. The motion as amended is to charge \$18.00 for tickets for adults, ages 18 to 35, but waive this charge for JRC household members. Motion by Nancy, seconded by Marie. Vote: 13 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

**Motion passed.** It was also agreed that the membership committee will review the age categories for members and recommend any needed clarifications or changes.

**III.B.6. High Holiday Tickets for Young Adults policy as passed 3/13/24 (with friendly amendment):**

III.B.6.b. JRC will offer \$18 High Holiday tickets to young adults, ages 18 to 35, and young adults who are not affiliated with JRC, in order to enhance JRC's visibility, encourage young adults to experience the warm and welcoming community that is JRC, introduce them to our clergy, and to support young adults as they begin their professional lives and continue their search for a spiritual community. This \$18 ticket fee will be waived for young adults who are part of a current member household. Additionally, young adults who currently attending high school and are ages 18 and above do not need a ticket to attend services but must attend with a ticketed adult. (3/2024)

**IX. Executive Director's Report – Micky.** Micky's written report and financial "dashboard" is in the Board's Dropbox files. Micky reported that there are currently four "taste" families, and she expects two to three families to join JRC. Micky and Rabbi Rachel advised the Board that senior staff has mapped out an approach to hiring for our open staff positions and may reach out to the Board for assistance with lay leaders' interviews.

**X. Consent Agenda – Rabbi, Cantor, and Board Members.**

Written consent agenda reports are in the Board's drop box files for the meeting. Included in the reports is a document entitled, "Timeline for the JRC FY25 Board Action Plan Development." Emily walked the Board through the timeline, and explained that prior to the next Board meeting, Board members will be asked to identify our top three priority objectives. The April Board meeting will include an interactive discussion of the priorities and action steps.

Emily reported that Reconstructing Judaism has signed on to a statement of the Progressive Israel Network regarding the Israel/Palestine conflict that is similar to JRC's statement, although it specifically calls for a ceasefire.

Marie stated that the Shabbaton put together by Rabbi Rachel was "amazing from start to finish." Other Board members agreed. Rabbi Rachel advised the Board that Rabbi Zach Weiner, who led the minyan service, was eager to work with JRC again.

Rabbi Rachel reported that she has signed an eight-year contract with JRC. She expressed her deep joy and gratitude for the work of JRC.

A motion was made to pass the consent agenda. Motion by Irv, second by Emily. Vote: 13 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

**XI. Upcoming Meetings and Tasks – Hannah.**

Hannah reminded members to sign up for gift giving, D’var, snacks and Zoom gabbai slots for Board meetings. The next Board meeting will be on April 10, 2024.

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

<b>Micky Baer</b>	Ellen Slattery for implementing a wonderful filing system in the JRC office
<b>Micky Baer</b>	Rabbi Rachel for all the visioning, planning, and execution it took to make our Shabbaton happen
<b>Micky Baer</b>	Mike O’Neill and Miguel for always going above and beyond in supporting events at JRC
<b>Emily Harris</b>	Danny Greene for leading a program for university faculty which will lead to an affinity group
<b>Emily Harris</b>	Hanna Tzucker Seltzer, Carolyn Shapiro, and Elise Cohen for serving on a panel and sharing their experiences with the group and modeling honesty and vulnerability
<b>Emily Harris</b>	Mark Zivin Putting together the March 19 Parents’ Circle Program
<b>Emily Harris</b>	Abby Harris-Ridker leading the February 25 Conversation Circle, coordinating facilitators, and developing a facilitation guide
<b>Emily Harris</b>	Marla Baker for taking leadership on the IP working group programming team including coordinating the University Program, Conversation Circles and serving as a conversation circle facilitator
<b>Emily Harris</b>	Cece Lobin, Laura Friedlander, and Cindy Aaronson for serving as facilitators for the conversation circles
<b>Emily Harris</b>	Rabbi Rachel and Marie Davidson for doing an outstanding job putting the amazing Shabbaton together

**XIII. Good and Welfare** – matters were discussed.

**XIV. Executive Session** – matters were discussed.

**XV. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Katz  
Board Secretary