



RODEF SHALOM CONGREGATION

Minutes of the 2021 Annual Meeting

June 13, 2021

Meeting held by Zoom with Trustees and Speakers in person

Welcome by Simon Leiderman, Chair

The meeting recording is inaudible during the introduction and welcome by meeting chair, Simon Leiderman.

Invocation by Rabbi Sharyn Henry

Rabbi Henry greeted everyone warmly stating that it was good to see members that she hasn't seen in quite some time. She shared that rabbis have been discussing in their forums a story from the Talmud that describes the lives of a father and son who lived inside a cave for 12 years to avoid a death sentence imposed by the Roman emperor. When they were told that it was safe they emerged from the cave and saw people engaged in regular everyday life and they reacted with dismay that the people weren't studying Torah. At that point they were told to return to the cave as it was apparent that they weren't ready to come out. This story provides context to examine what it means to emerge from some kind of seclusion and connects to the sense we've all had of how strange its been getting used to again doing all those things we did regularly and without thinking about them. We ask ourselves what's the big deal, but it is a big deal. We are blessed to be here and to be able to return to the world. We are blessed that we have science and that we have patience, understanding and compassion for one another. And so we begin this meeting as we begin our day with the prayer Modeh Ani.

D'var Torah by Rabbi Aaron Bisno

The Torah portion, Chukat, recounts how God informed Moses of his brother Aaron's pending death. And in the midrash the rabbis describe how Moses then makes Aaron aware that his life is coming to an end. The rabbis teach that in that moment Aaron felt the weight of his mortality. This past year has brought to many of us moments to consider our own mortality or demise. Similarly reports of the demise of the American synagogue make us aware that the threats and challenges are real and present. Helping Rodef Shalom to prepare our temple for the future as we address the day-to-day has been an ongoing focus for our tremendously dedicated leaders under the watchful eye of President, Karen Brean. Our officers, trustees and staff have helped to steer the congregation through significant community challenges. In Chukat we consider Moses' leadership style which speaks to the collective importance of confronting hard realities with sensitivity and strength. This is our responsibility, to care for our congregation and its congregants today and with a renewed sense of purpose to care for the future in common cause and with sacred purpose.

President's Remarks by Karen Brean

Last year's Annual Meeting occurred a few short months after the decision was made to close the building. This meant embracing the need for technology as all services and programs became virtual experiences. Now it appears that we are turning the corner and Rodef recently reopened for in person services. Karen stated that throughout this period of change and turmoil we continue to hold fast to our core values. And she cited the four key principles articulated by Rabbi Bisno that the board is using to guide the congregation through this time. These principles are: our mission remains the same, but we are looking for new ways of achieving it. Our mission is shared with our

neighboring congregations. No individual congregation is able to face it's challenges on its own and lastly our community is much larger than we imagine.

Karen informed the congregation that she has been meeting with the presidents of other local Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservation congregations to discuss and engage in opportunities to collaborate. She shared that Rodef purchased the domain name of fifthandmorewood.com explaining that this is a concept being explored to create an adjacent and complementary nonprofit organization to advance the role and impact of Progressive Jewish institutions in our tri state region. A taskforce has convened to advance the vision of Fifth and Morewood. Karen announced that Rabbi Bisno now holds a Doctor of Divinity from Hebrew Union College and will also mark his 18th year at RSC. Please stay tuned for details about a fall event.

In advance of the report from the Nominating Committee Chair Karen announced that after this meeting there will be a vacancy in the Senior Vice President position. Bill Klingensmith will be appointed to fill this position at the July 8th board meeting . At this point Karen Brean officially resigned as President of the congregation and Matthew Falcon stepped into the position.

Karen thanked Matthew for hitting the ground running and she went on to thank the rabbis, Executive Committee, staff, congregational volunteers, and all of the members of the congregation for the opportunity to serve these past three years. Karen thanked her husband Rich for his support, patience and remarkable sense of humor.

Recognition of Retiring Trustees & Election of Officers and Trustees by Nominating Committee Chair, Meredith Strassburger

Nominating Committee Chair, Meredith Strassburger expressed appreciation to the following committee members for their efforts; Julie Lichtenstein, Steve Abo, Helen Orringer, Susan Loether, Erin Barr and Jennifer Berliner.

Trustees rotating off the board are Bob Rosenthal, Secretary and trustee, Alexey Kharitonov. Karen Brean is resigning as President and rotating off the Executive Committee and as noted above Matthew Falcon will fill the vacancy until the end of the term.

The Nominating Committee's recommendations follow.

The nominees recommended for a three year term are: Bill Battistone and Mollie Hanna Lang.

The committee also recommended that the following trustees be re-elected for a second three year term: Hal Coffey, David Kalson, Sarah Rosenson and Jan Shaw.

Board officers were recommended for a one year term as follows:

Peter Rosenfeld, Vice President

Eric Kruman, Vice President

Joel Katz, Treasurer

Salem Leaman, Assistant Treasurer

Alex Heit, Secretary

Jodi Weisfield, Assistant Secretary.

The slate of officers and trustees was voted on and accepted.

Installation of Officers by Rabbi Aaron Bisno

Rabbi Bisno asked the members nominated to serve as trustees and officers to join him and Rabbi Henry in asking for blessings for fulfilling the duties of their positions.

Simon Leiderman announced that there would be a brief break to transition from the Sanctuary to Levy Hall where they would present the Sustainability portion of the meeting. Due to unexpected audio difficulty for those attending virtually the presenters returned to the Sanctuary and repeated the portions that had been inaudible to the virtual audience.

Approval of the Minutes of the 2020 Annual Meeting by Trustee, Simon Leiderman

Simon asked for a vote to approve the 2020 meeting minutes. The minutes of the 2020 Annual Meeting were unanimously approved.

Financial Overview and Budget Presentation by Assistant Treasurer, Joel Katz and Committee member, Peter Rosenfeld

Joel Katz thanked the following members of the Budget and Finance Committee for their hard work: Peter Rosenfeld, Hal Coffey, Elinor Avigad, Eric Kruman and Jodi Weisfield.

The past year was a very challenging year because while we have a good understanding of our overhead costs, we had no idea what the revenue would be. The committee expects to come out this year in relatively good shape in part due to receiving Payroll Protection Program (PPP) funds, which is forgivable if you meet certain requirements. An application is being completed by our accounting firm, Schneider Downs. Employee Retention Tax Credit became available to companies that received PPP funding so that option is being considered. Payroll taxes are withheld and we must determine the best ways to maximize the credit as well as to get the maximum loan forgiveness by the Small Business Administration.

Joel presented the information contained on the slides showing annual revenue sources and annual expense categories.

Revenue: Membership 30%, individual contributions 16%, endowment funds 21%, rental revenue 8%, program fees 9% and grants and foundations 16%.

Expenses: Programming, education and worship expenses were slightly under 50%, administration and finance 20%, facilities 26%, and security 6 -7%. Compensation is part of each category to the extent that there is personnel in each category.

There is no dues increase this year and we are continuing the security assessment for congregants, tenants and event rentals.

The Falk School will continue to use the facility through December 2021. The budget only includes rent from tenants that we know we are going to receive. We anticipate additional facilities fees for various life cycle events held at the synagogue.

Some employees accepted voluntary pay decreases last year and those have been restored in the budget. Hourly employees have been brought up to a minimum of \$15 an hour.

The budget is based on a draw of no more than 5% from our endowment funds and less than 5% from restricted funds due to the challenges faced in offering programs that are in line with the stated intent of those funds. Our draw from invested funds is significantly less than in past years.

Peter Rosenfeld shared a few more points about the budget noting that the total amount is half a million dollars less than the 2019-2020 budget due to budget cuts. The draw on the endowment was close to 8% two years ago and he believes that the congregation is making good progress toward having a balanced budget.

He stated that the committee was very conservative in developing the budget noting that it no longer includes any anticipated bequests as was past practice. The committee was very conservative with the amounts estimated to come from grant funding as well.

Presentation by the Women of Rodef Shalom by WRS President, Terry Starrett

Terry presented a check to the congregation in the amount of \$15,000 to be used as needed.

Senior Vice President's Remarks by Matthew Falcone

Matthew shared a few thoughts about sustainability and remarked that while last year was difficult it also gave the congregation an opportunity to work with partners like the Falk School. He believes that how we look at utilizing the building will be critical to the congregation's vitality and its role in the community. He went on to note the

unexpected partnership between the Family Center and Falk School and stated that Rodef will continue to look for these opportunities to do good and provide help to the community.

Recognition of Outgoing President by the Executive Committee

Matthew Falcone stated that stepping into Karen's role gave him insight into how much time and effort she gave to the congregation. He thanked her for all that she's done for the past three years and for taking him under her wing.

Presentation of Employee of the Year Award by Rabbi Sharyn Henry

Rabbi Henry praised Molly May, Cantorial Soloist for all that she did to help the worship team manage the challenges of the past year. Her talent, thoughtfulness and generosity are some of the reasons why she was selected for the Employee of the Year award. Rabbi Henry spoke eloquently of Molly's gifts to the congregation.

RSC Volunteer of the Year Award by President, Karen Brean

This award was presented to the Leaman Family, Carol, Salem and Rachel. Karen listed the numerous ways in which the Leamans work to meet the needs of our community.

Women of Rodef Shalom Awards by WRS President, Terry Starrett

Marilyn Asimow was recognized as the Volunteer of the Year and Marion Damick received a Lifetime Achievement Award. Marion, who will turn 96 in two months, stated that as a Jew you aren't living if you aren't doing something to help other people.

Presentation of Brotherhood Awards by Brotherhood President, Tim Litman

Tim Litman announced that Peter Rosenfeld is the recipient of the award for the 2021 Volunteer of the Year. Les Berkowitz was recognized as the Humanitarian of the Year by Tim who noted that the distinction was well deserved.

Retirement Recognition of Judy Sheffler by Family Center Director, Mimsie Leyton and Senior Vice President, Matthew Falcone

Judy was honored and thanked for her 15 years of service to the preschool families.

Benediction by Rabbi Walter Jacob

Rabbi Jacob expressed his appreciation for being a part of the Annual meetings going back to 1955. He stated that all of us should feel very grateful for all of the people who have participated in the meeting because they are the ones who have kept the congregation going. He noted that as a neighbor of Karen Brean he knows her leadership style and appreciates how she deals with all of the constituents of the congregation. Rabbi Jacob suggested that we put this unprecedented year in a broader perspective stating that it is not as unusual as we might imagine considering that there are those present who were alive during the Holocaust. Looking at this year from a longer perspective he affirmed that others before us have managed through times like these as well. And so we move on and perhaps we find that we have shed some of our old stodgy image and we can look at the past with gratitude and at the future with hope and know that God will move us on to an even better future.

Simon Leiderman thanked everyone for their work and the meeting adjourned at 12:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,



Bob Rosenthal, Board Secretary