

180th ANNUAL CONGREGATION MEETING
Tuesday, May 24, 2022

The meeting began at 7:00PM in the 5th Floor Chapel and was made available via Zoom.

Cantor Stefano Iacono (SI) led a niggun.

Peter Ehrenberg (PE) welcomed the congregation and made his opening remarks. He noted that the meeting was being conducted as a hybrid meeting, with members both participating in person and over Zoom and with Barbara Zakin (BZ) monitoring the chat portion of the Zoom meeting. He noted that, for those participating remotely, objections must be entered into the chat so BZ could let the group know that an objection was raised. Anyone participating remotely who does not enter an objection in the chat would be treated as voting affirmatively. Those members participating in person would have the opportunity to vote by raising their hands.

PE then called the meeting to order. He asked BZ to confirm that a quorum had been reached and she did so.

PE then asked Rabbi Greg Weitzman (GW) to do the invocation, which GW did.

PE then asked for a motion to waive the reading of last year's minutes and to approve those minutes. The motion was made and seconded. PE asked all those objecting to please raise their hands or signify their objection in the chat; seeing no objections, the motion was approved.

PE then made remarks:

As I commented last year at this time, our annual meeting provides us with a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the past year and to glimpse into the future. The goal is not to pat ourselves on our backs or to see the world through rose color glasses, but rather to focus our thoughts and energies on how we can assure ourselves that our synagogue life meets and exceeds our very high expectations.

As we look back, we can use the priorities we set for last year as a measuring stick.

- We set as a goal **developing and implementing re-opening strategies**. As we all know, we planned and we planned, and the pandemic kept changing in front of us. The fact that some of us wear masks tonight, by choice, others do not wear masks, also by choice, and still others chose not to attend in person out of health concerns, shows that we have not yet heard the "all's clear siren" that so many of us are longing for.

- We set as a goal **successfully transitioning our clergy team**. If you were able to share in the utter joy of our two – yes, not one, but two – joint installations, first for Rabbi Goldberg and Cantor Iacono and then last week for Rabbi Spratt and Cantor De Lowe – you know that we have been remarkably successful in launching our new clergy team. But here, too, there is more to do. Too many of us have not interacted sufficiently with our new clergy. **If you have not yet met Rabbi Goldberg and Cantor Iacono, please look for ways to connect with them.** I can assure you that they are trying extremely hard to do just the same. And, in a little more than a month, we will have the opportunity to greet one more new member of our clergy team, as **Rabbi Mira Weller will join us**. Of course, with these additions, there also comes one subtraction. I hope that you will join us for Shabbat Services on June 3rd when we will thank Rabbi Greg Weitzman for all that he has done for our Synagogue and for the many connections that he has inspired first as a Rabbinic Intern and then as our Rabbi since 2015.
- We set as a goal **expanding congregant connections, through an expansion of our Minyan program, through a resumption of congregant trips and through a resumption of congregant dinners**. Our civil rights trip, led by Rabbi Spratt and Cantor De Lowe, was so popular that it sold out within five minutes, leading us to transform that trip from one trip into two trips so that we could double the number of congregants who participated in that very meaningful trip.
- We set as a goal **an effort to meet a challenging financial climate**. We did just that, keeping careful control over our expenses and conducting a very successful Annual Appeal. And yet, as you will hear in Stacy Kanter’s remarks tonight as she presents our budget to you, and as you consider the shattering impact of inflation and other macro-economic factors on us today, the financial climate continues to challenge us.
- We set as a goal **supporting the expansion of our development and membership efforts**. As I alluded to a moment ago, our Annual Appeal last year was highly successful, both in terms of the dollars we raised and, equally as important, in terms of the number of thank you calls and messages we communicated to our generous donors. While membership numbers remain a challenge for us, given the number of people who have moved out of the City, this past year saw an incredibly high number of members rejoining our Synagogue. And, on May 7th, we held our first ever Togetherfest, a brain child of our staff and clergy, that resulted in over 800 sign-ups, many of whom were non-members or new members.
- We determined last year that we must **prioritize our use of technology**. To those of you who have prayed in our sanctuary this year, you know that our visual t’filah adds a new dimension to our services. While not for everyone, I know that I love looking up during services rather than keeping my eyes focused on a book in my lap. And, we are now able to project the images of distant speakers on our walls, as we observed when we honored our new clergy months ago and more recently when we honored Arnie Bressler and Monica Jacobson for their service as chairs of our Israel Committee.
- We **prioritized engaging in a multi-faceted Strategic Planning Process**. We have done just that. We have hired consultants, engaged in fact-finding, including a survey sent to all of our members, and now are hard at work figuring out how best to turn the information we have compiled into viable strategies.
- We **prioritized the expansion of our focus on social justice issues**, the difficulty of which is heightened during Covid when many of our existing programs were suspended. Through the

vision of lay leadership, the clergy and our staff and the tireless work of many of our members, we launched a multi-faceted initiative to address the rights of the under-represented, we studied and spoke out against anti-semitism, we sent post-cards throughout the country to get out the vote, we sent messages to our legislators and, where possible, resumed some of our important programming in a continuing effort to repair the world.

- We are **encouraging discussion regarding our relationship with Israel**. We know that there are issues regarding that relationship, but those issues don't get any easier by ignoring them. Our Israel Committee brought us into dialogue with Israeli leaders this past year. And our Rodeph Sholom School showed its own leadership by developing a mission statement regarding Israel. I am hoping that in the coming year, we can follow the RSS lead and develop our own congregational mission statement.
- And, while on the topic of RSS, I note that we also **prioritized collaboration between RSS and the educators in our Sholom Sprouts, Discoveries and Adventures programs**. We saw, in the amazing steps taken to open and then keep open the school doors this year, that our educators at RSS and our Synagogue are not only brilliant, but have the tenacity to confront the remarkable challenges facing educators in Covid.

As we look forward, we know that we will once again go through the process of setting priorities for the coming year. That process involves collaboration among the clergy, the staff and lay leaders to develop a coherent, concrete and well conceptualized set of priorities that I plan to announce in the Fall. As you will hear tonight from Stacy Kanter, and as you have heard from her and her predecessors for many many years, by far the largest part of our budget involves our personnel costs. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that so much of our future depends upon our people, some of whom you see regularly on the bimah, some of whom you know to call whenever you are in need and so many of whom work behind the scenes, making sure that our Synagogue and our clergy are always there for you, day in and day out, for major life cycle events and for all those little but important things that we each count on when we consider our Synagogue as our second home.

And so, whether I am looking forward and or looking back at the last year, I end up in the same place, wanting to make sure that I express my gratitude:

- To our Staff, for your endless support, for your long and difficult hours, for your guidance and for your love of our Synagogue.
- To our Clergy, for your incredible inspiration, for your insightful teachings, for your modeling of what it means to live our Jewish values and for your love of our Synagogue.
- To our officers and trustees, both past and current, for your leadership, for your willingness to take time out of your busy lives to devote to the Synagogue, for your patience with me and for your love of our Synagogue.
- And to our members. Without your generosity and your love of our Synagogue, nothing that we do at Rodeph Sholom would be possible.

I know that there are challenges ahead of us, but I could not think of a better team to meet those challenges than the team of staff, clergy, lay leaders and members that I am so fortunate to consider as my colleagues and friends. If you heard optimism in my remarks tonight, you heard right, because I am incredibly optimistic about our future under our new clergy team. If you heard some level of reserve in

that optimism, you also heard right, because these are tricky times for all of us. But most importantly, I hope that you heard in my remarks tonight a message of thanks for all that everyone does to make Rodeph Sholom a very special place for all of us and our families. We are blessed by the goodness and kindness in our midst, and for that my wife Camille and I are so very grateful.

PE then asked Treasurer Stacy Kanter (SK) to present the FY23 Budget Report.

SK then presented the Treasurer remarks.

SK thanked PE and asked that any questions be held until the end of the presentation.

SK noted that last year we delivered a balanced budget for FY22 with ends on June 30th.

With thanks to everyone here and throughout the Congregation for a record-breaking Annual Appeal and full forgiveness of both PPP loans, we are projecting an FY22 operating surplus of almost \$1.0 million. Despite recent market volatility and as a result of our recent capital campaign, our operating and capital reserves are above their targets, and those reserves along with the Foundation Fund, Perpetual Care Fund, Accessibility Fund and Sprouts seed money are positioned to support our operating budget in FY23 and beyond.

Turning to FY23, we are seeking approval of a balanced budget that reflects our values and priorities — who we are.

We have assumed a slight decrease in membership units as we continue to emerge from the pandemic and address other challenges. After keeping membership dues flat for three years, without any increases, and tuition for Discoveries (formerly Religious School) flat for two years, we have assumed 4.2% increase in dues and a 4.0% increase in tuition.

For budgeting purposes, we have assumed a 5 percent reduction from the current year's Annual Appeal, which is typical of pre-pandemic budgets — but certainly not our goal. The budget also assumes draws from the earnings in our Foundation Fund, Operating and Capital Reserves and Perpetual Care Fund, as well as principal draws from the Foundation Fund, Operating and Capital Reserves, Accessibility Fund and Sprouts seed money (the last two of which were established by our recent capital campaign). Finally, we have used the FY22 operating surplus in the FY23 budget.

Our FY23 budget reflects a return of programming to pre-pandemic levels and includes investment in several strategic initiatives to stabilize and eventually grow membership. People continue to represent roughly 80 percent of our expenses. Our employees are impacted by inflation, as we all are; we had to take inflation into account when considering the compensation of our staff and clergy as well as our dues and tuition increases.

We have budgeted clergy and staff salary increases, additional support for Programming and the Business Office, and restoration of employer pension contributions for clergy and contract employees (employer pension contributions were restored for everyone else in FY22). Finally, we have included a 2.0% contingency, a buffer just in case — higher than the 1.0% pre-pandemic contingencies but lower than FY22's contingency.

We remain focused on the financial and other challenges ahead of us — increasing salary and benefit expenses, necessary capital expenditures, demographic changes on the UWS and throughout the city and the sustainability of our current cost structure.

We seek approval of the consolidated CRS budget for FY23, which includes the Rodeph Sholom School. The synagogue budget has been approved by the synagogue budget committee and Board of Trustees, and the RSS budget has been approved by the RSS finance committee and Board of Directors.

Budgeted revenue for FY23 for CRS, including the Rodeph Sholom School, is \$34,557,025, which includes the carry-over of FY22 surpluses of \$1,640,220. Budgeted operating expenses are \$33,401,825, including a \$620,273 contingency, and budgeted capital expenditures are \$1,155,200, resulting in a balanced budget for FY23.

SK asked if there were any questions before seeking a motion to approve the budget. PE asked for a motion to approve the FY23 CRS budget as presented by the Treasurer and as approved by the Board of Trustees. The motion was made and seconded. PE asked all those objecting to please raise their hands or signify their objection in the chat; seeing no objections, the FY23 was approved by the members of the congregation.

Martin Flumenbaum (MF) noted that the following Officers were nominated to serve for one-year terms ending in June 2023.

Peter Ehrenberg – President
Judy Gallent – Assistant Treasurer
Stacy Kanter – Treasurer
Eileen Kleiman – Vice President
Andrea Kretchmer – Vice President
Cara Lown – Vice President
Annette Orenstein – Vice President
Suzanne Waltman – Vice President
Rob Steinman – Chair of the CRS Board of Trustees

MF reported that the new Trustees nominated to serve for a three-year term ending in 2025 were:

Janet Cohen
Adam Rosman
Kim Zinn

MF further reported that incumbent Trustees nominated for re-election to serve for a three-year term ending in 2025 were:

Dina Bakst
Scott Bernstein
Annette Orenstein
Candice Braun

The other officers being nominated were also nominated to continue to serve as Trustees for a one-year term or, if longer, until their current terms on the Board expire. He noted, too, that there would be a new RSS Board Chair beginning in June and in accordance with our by-laws, the CRS Board will elect the new Board chair to the CRS Board once they have been elected Chair by the RSS Board.

PE asked that Nominating Committee members introduce the nominees prior to the vote.

Jackie Weiss (JW) introduced nominee Janet Cohen (JC).

Jeff Ravitz (JR) introduced Adam Rosman (AR).

Lisa Pruzan (LP) introduced Kim Zinn (KZ).

PE asked if there were any questions or comments. **PE asked for a motion to approve the nominations as presented by Marty Flumenbaum and as recommended by the Nominating Committee.** The motion was made and seconded. PE asked all those objecting to please raise their hands or signify their objection in the chat; seeing no objections, the motion was approved.

PE asked that the three new Trustees come to the front and for a **clergy blessing of the new Trustees.**

PE asked Beth Rubin (BR) to the reading table.

BR talked about finding Mira Weller (MW).

BR reiterated, from last year, that hiring our clergy is one of the most sacred and important duties that we have as a congregation and is a duty that we take very seriously. We assembled a search committee, led by Stacy Kanter; met with Rabbi Weller and arranged for her to meet with congregants, staff, and clergy in a compact timeframe. Rabbi Weller moved us deeply as she recounted her Jewish journey and impressed us with her intelligence, warmth, breadth of experience, and generosity of spirit.

Rabbi Weller received her ordination at HUC-LA just last Sunday. She studied Culture and Politics at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and received her Masters degree in Jewish Education at the Rhea Hirsch School of Education at HUC. Rabbi Weller speaks Hebrew, Spanish, and some ASL. She has a passion for uncovering new possibilities in the great wealth of our tradition and for making music inspired by Judaism's many cultures. BR concluded by noting that Rabbi Weller would be a wonderful addition to our clergy team.

PE asked for a motion to approve the appointment of Mira Weller as an Assistant Rabbi, as recommended by the Board. The motion was made and seconded. PE asked all those objecting to please raise their hands or signify their objection in the chat; seeing no objections, the motion was approved and PE said "I welcome and am pleased that we are appointing Mira Weller as an Assistant Rabbi.

Rabbi Mira Weller (MW) provided a response to her election over Zoom. She thanked BR for her introduction and expressed how lucky she felt to be joining the team at CRS.

Rabbi Ben Spratt (BHS) and Cantor Shayna De Lowe (SDL) came to the reading table to present a Memorial to the Departed:

Robert Kurschner
Sharon Epstein
Carole Lieberman
Irwin Dickman
Barry Garfinkel
Jorge Ducasse
Ira Karp
Joel Fener
Paula Sarnoff Oreck
Louis Silbert
Lori Zabar
Eva Reisman
Mort Cohen
Sally Lubell
Andrew "Drew" Slocum
Jonathan Levin
Paula Biran
Vlad Portnoy
Hannah Hess

PE thanked BHS and SDL.

PE announced that we anticipate a change to the by-laws at next year's Annual Meeting.

PE asked if there were any special matters to bring up or if anyone had any questions. There were none.

PE asked for a motion to approve the following resolution:

"RESOLVED, that all actions taken by the Board of Trustees of Congregation Rodeph Sholom since the last Annual Meeting of members, including all actions taken by the Board's Executive

Committee and Nominating Committee, and each of such actions hereby is approved and ratified by the members of the Congregation.”

The motion was made and seconded. PE asked all those objecting to please raise their hands or signify their objection in the chat; seeing no objections, the motion was approved.

PE called on Rabbi Juli Karol (JK) and Rabbi Deborah Goldberg (DG) for the benediction.

JK and DG delivered the benediction.

The 180th Annual Meeting of Congregation Rodeph Sholom was adjourned.