



## Panel 1 Meeting 2 Summary 11.06.2014

**Panel members (in attendance):** Wendy Baldinger, Zalman Bendet, Gail Gendler, Ellen Konstan, Margie Solomon, Maureen Davidson, Ben Savin

**Panel members (not in attendance):** Frances Fischer, Shelley Robbins

**Steering Committee Member:** Jean King

**Staff:** David Milavetz

### **Panel Focus/Goals**

The meeting opened with discussion about and clarification of the focus and timeline of the panel. Points that were raised include:

- *Timeline:* The panel decided that the focus of the timeline on Non-Jewish communities, other Jewish communities and the St. Paul community was a good approach.
- *Testimonies:* The panel is engaged with and wants to hear from testifiers. A list of people who will be asked to testify will be decided by the fourth panel meeting.
- *Panel focus:* It became clear at the first meeting that the panel needed to more clearly define who is being welcomed. The panel members decided that their work will focus on welcoming, not attracting, community members.
- *Evaluation:* There was a discussion about the importance of developing a way to evaluate our own recommendations. The panel will continue to pay attention to this issue.

### **TC Jewfolk Article**

The panel had a discussion on the TC Jewfolk article *Confessions Of An Unaffiliated Jew* and what it meant about the Jewish community. Briefly, the article is about a Jewish family who relocated to Minnesota fourteen years ago and has yet to feel connected to a synagogue or the greater Jewish community. The author discusses some of the challenges she and her family have faced.

- There was a belief that there needed to be a larger effort from both the Jewish community and those new to it—the effort needs to be made by both parties.
- There was discussion on how to fill the void between what people need and what is currently provided. For example, what a young professional needs to engage in the community might not currently be provided or accessible. The discussion centered on how to fill those gaps.
- The panel discussed the barriers to involvement, including onboarding processes and price.
- It was clear that it is important to help facilitate connections as part of a welcoming process.



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- Ideas generated:
  - Create a toolkit created to welcome people into the community
  - Develop strategies for intentionally building connections between people new to the St. Paul Jewish community (either new to the area or making the transition from un-affiliated to affiliated) and current members of the community
  - Research onboarding processes for colleges and corporations

### **Learning from Non-Jewish Communities Activity**

In this activity people broke into three groups. Each group discussed an article about welcoming in non-Jewish communities. The articles specifically focused on LGBTQ, Immigrant and Civic (Parks and Recreation) communities and their focus on welcoming. The following themes emerged as a part of the discussion:

#### *Aspects of creating a welcoming community*

Across the conversations, there were several emergent themes:

- **Clear objective:** Have a specific and clear purpose
- **Depth:** Create depth to welcoming. Continue to be active and commit to inclusivity
- **Understand the issues:** It is vital to understand the issues and barriers people face when becoming part of a community
- **Attend to diverse populations within the community.** Several panelists noted how the articles focused on diverse populations within organizations and communities. It is important to recognize and attend to the diversity within the communities, not just between those “in” the community and those entering the community
- **Evaluate:** There is a need to assess the progress a community makes towards welcoming newcomers.

#### *What this might mean for the greater St. Paul Jewish Community*

The final part of the exercise was to have people discuss how what they’ve learned through the articles affects the St. Paul Jewish community. Here are several common themes:

- **Central Resource:** Panelists felt that having a central hub of information or resource would help to effectively welcome people to the community
- **Host Families:** Many panelists indicated how important it is for newcomers in the community to have host families for Shabbat and other holidays
- **Celebrate Success:** The small groups discussed that it is important to celebrate successes. In order to do that, the community would need to be able to evaluate or find benchmarks for what defines success



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- **Informal Leaders:** It is important to reach out and engage informal leaders in the community with creating a more welcoming, inclusive environment

Specific ideas mentioned during this portion of the meeting include:

- Community Service Projects
- Young Professional Happy Hour
- Potluck dinners
- Sharing recipes and customs
- Social action projects

### **Big Decisions and Action Items**

1. Need to incorporate evaluating and assessment into recommendations
2. Need to research how to develop or utilize a toolkit for welcoming people
3. Research Colleges' and Corporate onboarding processes
4. Further explore the ideas generated in the "*What this might mean for the greater St. Paul Jewish Community*" section above