

United Jewish Federation  
October 23, 2023, 8:00PM  
Zoom  
Board Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Michael Schlessinger, David Gordon, Diane Sloyer, CEO, Edith Samers, Linda Hurwitz, Susan Kostin, Alan Barr, Stacy Ferber, Jessica Brand, Adam Rafalowicz, , Robin Fischel, Chris Maroc, Ami Soifer, Rhonda Schaffer-Maroon, Caryn Halbrecht, Dinah Miller Marlowe, Greg Waldstreicher, Joshua Esses, Robert Hoff, Jill Kaplan, Ellen Weber, Rachel Klein,

Eric Ross-Deputy Director UJF, Sharon Lewis, Director JCRC

Absent: Cathy Satz, Bob Abrams, Kerrin Behrend,

The meeting was called to order at 8:06PM via Zoom

**Approval of Minutes of September 20, 2023 – Linda Hurwitz**

As the minutes from September 20, 2023 have not yet been placed on the portal, they will be reviewed at the November board meeting along with minutes from today.

**Emergency fund: considerations for approval and giving to date (Michael/David/Diane)**

Michael introduced the discussion on the emergency fund in support of Israel and summarized the discussion of the Executive Committee (EC) held earlier. The EC felt the goal of \$1 million was daunting but it was appropriate and necessary. Raising money to assure Israel's survival is why UJF was set up 50 years ago. The emergency fund campaign will go concurrently with our UJF annual campaign. We will go forward with both because they are both critical. We don't have real time data on the contributions to the emergency fund but we think we are around \$300,000 plus the match.

**New Special Allocations Committee (Rhonda)**

A new special allocations committee chaired by Rhonda was formed and charged with identifying where the emergency funds for Israel will be directed and how this will be communicated to our community members, donors, and potential donors.

In addition to Rhonda, the diverse committee members include David Fischer, Mike Moskowitz, Ken Neuhaus, Molly Rafalowicz, Beverly Stein, and Rachel Waldstreicher. The 6 members represent Stamford, New Canaan, and Darien.

**Where our money is going; maximizing alignment with community priorities?**

The allocations committee proposes to distribute the first \$500,000 this week. The distribution is structured in 4 categories, with specific agencies in each category. These agencies have all been vetted with JFNA and the committee felt that each were very worthwhile. The breakdown of the distributions are:

1. Evacuation, Housing, Respite and Support for Frontline Communities \$175,000
  1. Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) -\$70,000
  2. JDC – providing economic relief and critical social services for people in the South as well as those displaced by the war. \$70,000
  3. Leket Israel – distributing prepared meals and pre-loaded credit cards to residents in the South and evacuees throughout the country. \$35,000
2. Victims of Terror \$100,000
  1. JAFI Fund for Victims of Terror – providing immediate financial aid to victims and their families. \$85,000
  2. Hostages and Missing Families Forum – providing support and assistance to the families of hostages in their efforts to bring their loved ones back home. \$15,000
3. Trauma Relief and PsychoSocial Care \$100,000
  1. Israel Trauma Coalition – providing trauma treatment for victims as well as training additional trauma clinicians to service victims across Israel. \$80,000
  2. World ORT – providing psychological support for students, teachers and their families in the ORT educational network throughout Israel. \$20,000
4. Emergency Medical Services and Healthcare \$125,000
  1. Barzilai Hospital – Ashkelon- \$35,000
  2. Soroka Medical Center -- Be'er Sheva- \$30,000
  3. Magen David Adom- \$10,000
  4. Zaka -- volunteer organization providing specialized search and rescue units . Also retrieves body parts at casualty sites to ensure proper Jewish burial of victims - \$30,000
  5. United Hatzalah, volunteer EMS organization -\$20,000

After much positive discussion and with great appreciation to Rhonda and the special allocations committee, a motion was made by Rachel and seconded by David to approve the distribution plan for the first \$500,000. The motion was passed unanimously.

Some of the discussion included:

Linda asked if a donor can make a donor designated gift for a specific organization or group. The answer was Yes. UJF will make the donation a passthrough with nothing stopping locally for administrative purposes. The donation will help count towards our total emergency campaign fund raising.

Caryn asked why we need our own allocations committee instead of just sending the money in as a passthrough. In a crisis, shouldn't we let the people on the ground make the decision where the money goes? The feeling was that marketing allocations can incentivize donors if they know where the money is going. JFNA does share information with us and suggest where the money could be used best.

Stacy asked if we will publish how much money will go to each category to foster transparency. We will publish how much money will go to each of the 4 categories of funding but not the amount to each individual organization within the category. Adam commended Rhonda and the committee for only allocating half of the money now.

### **Multi-tasking: Strategy to preserve annual campaign (Ellen)**

This year is for sure a challenge! We are over \$400,000 so we still need over \$800,000 to make our campaign goal for this year. The Israel emergency fund will affect our annual campaign for sure, but we MUST continue with our campaign and to determine how we position our campaign not to look insensitive. We will need new donors who have been identified for the campaign and the emergency fund. Going forward we need everyone's help. A volunteer matrix is being put together to identify where help is needed. Please take a look at it and put your name on as many items as you can. We need volunteers for events, phone calls, writing thank you notes, etc. Hanukkah is coming up and we will not forget about our donors during times of celebration. We have to do as much stewardship as possible during these times. May people, including young people, have already stepped up and we are grateful for that.

### **What are we hearing and seeing from the public. (Sharon and Eric)**

JCRC is our public affairs arm in Stamford. We've coordinated a lot of events including solidarity meetings and information meetings with schools, government officials (Senators Blumenthal and Murphy, Governor Lamont, Rep Blumenthal, Mayor Simmons, etc.) religious affiliations and allies, police, etc. All have been tremendously supportive in Stamford. Sharon will send out 'Thank You' notes to all who have been supportive and we are looking at ways to strengthen our relationships with Islamic friends as well. Eric has written to all the public schools and offered support. Yoav has spoken to our high schools emphasizing recognizing misinformation and learning to identify reliable sources of information. Bicultural has been visited as well. In terms of media, the Stamford Advocate had some disturbing op ed articles. Eric has reached out to the Advocate to correct some perceptions/information.

JFNA has put together marketing materials related to the 'fire house' analogy. We will use that in our marketing as well.

Diane mentioned that Mike Shanbrom has been a huge asset. We have increased security in many synagogues, organizations, etc. We've added police coverage related to expected anti-Israel rallies being advertised. Everyone in our community has stepped up and we are grateful. Ami asked how we can help dispel misinformation and feels that the NY Times slants toward anti-Israel information. The headlines about Israel bombing the Gaza hospital and then a small retraction when the correct information came out was not enough to dispel misinformation. We could write editorials to try to correct misinformation but there is nothing we can do to stop people from reading the NY Times.

Rob and Adam spoke about the good and the bad of sharing on social media. It is a double edge sword. It is helpful having UJF out there on social media and we should continue being visible.

Adam also mentioned that he is hearing others expressing 'donation fatigue', particularly this time of year. Young people have given beyond their capability now. Many of us receive solicitation daily and repetitively from organizations we have given to currently and in the past. Ellen said we should remember to tell donors that they can pledge now but give in 2024. This message is important and can be sensitive to the donation fatigue many are feeling.

Mike thanked everyone for the thoughtful discussions.

With no other business on the floor, a motion was made by Ami and seconded by Ellen to adjourn at 9:51PM.

Respectfully submitted  
Linda Hurwitz, Secretary

Upcoming board meetings:

Wednesday Nov. 29 7:30PM

Monday, December 11 (Annual Meeting)