**United Jewish Federation**

**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**

**March 17, 2021**

**Attendees:** Ricky Arbron, Jessica Batkin, Joshua Esses, Robin Fischel, David Gordon, Nan Gordon, Caryn Halbrecht, Linda Hurwitz, Jill Kaplan, Rachel Klein, Susan Kostin, Dinah Miller-Marlowe, Helen Miloslavsky, Jonathan Ostroff, Arlene Rosen, Edith Samers, Rhonda Schaffer-Maron, Michael Schlessinger, Tara Shapiro, Diane Sloyer, Beverly Stein, Sherry Steiner, Greg Waldstreicher, Ellen Weber.

Guest: Rabbi Joshua Hammerman

David called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

**New Board Member**

David **moved** that the Board approve the addition of Joshua Esses to the UJF Board of Directors where he will serve in the role of Chair, Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC).

The motion carried unanimously.

**Executive Committee**

The 2021 UJF Executive Committee members are proposed as follows:

Michael Schlessinger, Treasurer

Arlene Rosen, Secretary

Jonathan Ostroff, Marketing

Beverly Stein, Strategic Planning

Caryn Halbrecht, Security

Edith Samers, Endowments & Planned Giving

Rhonda Shaffer-Maron, Grants & Allocations

David **moved** that the Board approve the proposed membership of the 2021 UJF Executive Committee.

The motion carried unanimously.

**D’var Torah**

Rabbi Hammerman offered a d’var Torah. He noted that this year Passover begins on Saturday night, a timing which raises numerous questions concerning Shabbat observance. Technically, Passover preparations need to be completed by sundown on Friday. The rabbi observed that this situation makes him think of the book entitled *The Kosher Pig: And Other Curiosities of Modern Jewish Life* by Richard Israel. There are a myriad of imperfect situations in life, but as long as we set a high bar for our practices and behaviors, we need not beat ourselves up should we fall short at times. Be flexible!

**Approval of Minutes**

Arlene Rosen **moved** that the Board approve the minutes of the February 17, 2021 Board Meeting with the following amendments:

 -Correct spelling of Covid

 -State that the 7.1% increase in our campaign year over year 2019-2020 is in line with the experience of other **non- profits**, not specifically with other **Federations**

Michael Schlessinger seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**Finance** –Michael Schlessinger

To-date both expenses and revenue are consistent with 2021 budgeted expectations.

The UJF Operating Reserve Policy draft has been revised according to Board feedback from the February meeting. The document has been sent to the auditor for approval.

**Strategic Plan**—Beverly Stein

We are beginning a strategic planning process. The end goal is to develop 3 to 4 objectives which will guide the work of UJF going forward. Beverly Stein is leading this effort and will assemble a committee with representation from all the synagogues and agencies. The committee will include individuals wide-ranging in age and levels of Jewish community involvement.

There will be qualitative, in-depth interviews with approximately 20 people. There will also be an opt-in survey. The process will involve focus groups of such cohorts as Rabbis, agency executives, agency staff members, lay leaders, the UJF Board, and non-UJF affiliates at large. Updates will be provided to the UJF Board at regular intervals. Beverly hopes to conclude the effort by the end of 2021 with a formal, final report to be issued during quarter 1, 2022.

Beverly proposes that we work with a professional consultant who has experience doing this type of work. After reviewing various consultant candidates, Diane and Beverly have identified Joy Goldstein of Joy Goldstein Consulting <https://www.joygoldsteinconsulting.com/> as the preferred choice. Joy has done considerable work on strategic plans for Federations.

Beverly **moved** that UJF hire Joy Goldstein as a consultant to assist with the strategic plan at a price not to exceed $20,000. Caryn Halbrecht seconded the motion.

After a brief discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

**Education Committee Update**—Nan Gordon

Nan reported that the Passover learning session with Rabbi Shai Held was well-received and proved to be an inspiring experience.

There are two upcoming Passover learning sessions, 1.) a cooking demonstration with Chef Michael Solomonov, and 2.) a primer with Jonathan Fass on how to run a meaningful, interactive seder, whether virtual or in-person.

**Life After Covid**—David Gordon

David took a few moments to ask Board members to articulate their hopes and feelings as they look forward to life post-Covid. A variety of sentiments surfaced, chief among them was the wish to reconnect with family and to be free to travel more widely.

**Campaign** -- Ellen Weber

Ellen thanked all who participated in the Fairfield County Community Foundation Giving Day. We raised $3353 through this event and met a giving threshold which qualified us to receive a $1000 grant.

There were 850 donors to our 2020 campaign. We will be calling each of them to extend Passover greetings and to express thanks for their continued support. Ellen requested additional volunteers to complete these calls.

**Security Update**—Caryn Halbrecht

Most agencies have completed their applications for the state funding recently made available to non-profits to offset expenses for infrastructure security improvements. We received a $10,000 grant from Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) to assist our local agencies with these applications.

Together with 3, and possibly 4, Connecticut Federations, we are going forward with the plan to hire a regional director from the Secure Community Network (SCN). Greenwich, Western CT and New Haven Federations are on board. Fairfield may join the effort but has not yet made a formal commitment.

**Life and Legacy**—Edith Samers

Edith reported that we expect to exceed our published goal to receive 25 Letters of Intent on behalf of UJF by May 31. This will give us a head start on reaching our 2nd year commitment to the program.

There will be an outdoor event at the end of June to celebrate our success in reaching the year one milestone. Each UJF Life and Legacy participant will receive a small gift.

**CEO Update**—Diane Sloyer

A PJ Library grandparents group has been established. The first event was a discussion which involved 40 people on a Zoom session.

Planning is in process for new Affinity Group programs.

**New Business**

Tara Shapiro advised that the Women’s Philanthropy Dinner will be held at the end of May or in early June. The hope is to hold the event In-person, outside at the Stamford Museum and Nature Center. Masking and distancing will be required, and the food will be pre-packaged. There will also be a Zoom option.

**President Update**—David Gordon

David once again requested that Board members spend 10 minutes going through the UJF.org website and provide suggestions for improvement. He emphasized the need for us to reach more Jewish people in our catchment area and to impress upon them that UJF is a home for all and offers meaningful opportunities for every Jewish demographic.

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Arlene Rosen