

**Congregation Shomrei Emunah**

**Annual Meeting 2020**

**Monday, June 22nd**

**Agenda**

- Dvar Torah
- Approval of Minutes of 2019 Congregational Meeting
- Report of the President
- Approval of the 2020-2021 Budget
- Election of Officers and Trustees

**Minutes of the 2019 Congregational Meeting**  
**June 24th, 2019**

President Sara Ann Erichson called the meeting to order.

Rabbi David Greenstein gave a d'var torah.

The minutes of the 2018 Congregational Meeting were approved.

Sara Ann Erichson delivered the president's report which included a final financial forecast for the fiscal year ending June 30th, results of the 2019 SSFC campaign, the operation of the synagogue during the Rabbi's sabbatical, a programming recap, a membership update, a review of the Shomrei pre-school and JLC, among other items.

Bela Schwartz presented the 2019-2020 budget and fielded questions. The budget was accepted and approved by the congregation without changes.

Sara Ann presented the slate of officers and trustees for election. A motion was made to elect them and it passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

June 18, 2020

## **Report of the President**

I am pleased to report that we had a strong and meaningful year despite the outbreak of COVID-19 and the many challenges and uncertainties the virus has created for our community. The year at Shomrei can be thought of in two parts: the first eight months in which we were operating as usual and the past four months in which we found ourselves evolving so that we could continue to provide for our community in ways mostly virtual. Below are a few topics that I wish to highlight.

### **Synagogue Life**

Synagogue life, pre-pandemic, culminated with an amazing Erev Purim service on March 9th. Our sanctuary was full and joyous, and we enjoyed a lively megillah reading, great costumes and an awesome spiel that brought many of us to tears. Much of the year that preceded Purim was the same. Our Art Mazel Tov party combined our Preschool auction fundraiser with our annual celebration of Shomrei volunteers. The combined event raised \$10,000 for the Preschool and resulted in a large multigenerational audience to honor our five Shomrei Stars. We enjoyed music with Laurence Juber at this year's Concert for Eric and had a very special Shabbat weekend with our musical scholar-in-residence Deborah Sacks-Mintz. There were widely attended holiday parties for kids, family services, @nourish speakers and meaningful High Holiday services. I'm sure I'm leaving things out as this seems like a lifetime ago! Throughout this time there was the continuity of services at Shomrei, our community's work helping others through MESH, IHN, our Syrian Refugee Committee and the work of our social action team as well as helping members of our own community through our Mensch Squad. While there are always challenges, such as continued concerns around anti-semitism and the safety of our building, there was much joy.

With the outbreak of COVID-19, we made necessary decisions for the well being of our community. We closed our preschool and JLC first temporarily then through the end of the school year. In mid-March we closed the synagogue building until such time as we could safely reopen. Then we decided we could not hold camp this summer.

Since then, Rabbi Greenstein, Educational Director Heather Brown, and the rest of the professional staff have worked tirelessly to continue our school and synagogue life in an online environment. And so many Shomrei member volunteers have played a huge role as well. While being together virtually is not the same as in person, as Rabbi Greenstein often says (to paraphrase), our community is not defined by the building structure that houses us. In addition to our Kabbalat Shabbat service, Saturday morning Sharing Shabbat, and bi-weekly Havdalah

we are offering @nourish @home speakers, classes and discussions with the Rabbi and more. Below Heather talks about what has been happening at the Preschool and JLC for our children during this time. I hope that members reading this report feel that Shomrei has been there for them during what has been a time of uncertainty for us all and one of challenges for many.

As I wrote to you on June 4th, the synagogue leadership is now focused on what happens next. We have a Moving Forward task force that is led by incoming Shomrei president Miriam Haimes. The group's mission is to evaluate each aspect of our communal life and plan the ways in which we can come together both in the short term and mid term, virtually and in-person. As I write this, it is too early to know exactly what all our plans will be. We do know that we are starting our schools on schedule in September (unless the current course of the virus changes and new government restrictions are put in place) with the Preschool having reduced class sizes following COVID-19 restrictions. For the rest of the synagogue we are planning additional virtual experiences for the summer. And we are planning multiple scenarios for services in the fall...looking at both virtual and a hybrid model of in- person and virtual -- all leading, eventually, to a more full re-opening of the synagogue later on. We do not expect to hold "traditional" High Holiday services with a full social hall. All of the options that we are pursuing require investment in tools and in our building -- investments which we are making -- whether it be better technology, infrastructure improvements, cleaning upgrades and more.

The Moving Forward team is working on dates for when decisions need to be made. And, we want to hear from all of you! Please look out for a Shomrei survey that you will receive in a few days and respond to it. Your input is important as we make our plans.

## **Membership**

I am very pleased to report that we are ending the year with 215 member households -- a *net gain* of 6 households compared to last year. We welcomed *18 new households* into our community as members. Half of our new members are Preschool families - a continuation in the trend of Preschool families joining the synagogue. The 12 households that left Shomrei are a combination of resignations (several due to moves) and deaths. Much thanks to Gails Stocks, our VP of Membership, who did an outstanding job in her first year in this role.

As we look ahead to this upcoming year we expect gaining new members will be a challenge. Prospective members often check us out over the summer and attend our many events in the fall, including high holiday services. Given that we don't expect to return to "normalcy" in the short term we will plan for new opportunities to attract members.

## **Synagogue Financials**

Bela Schwartz, VP of Finance, and Pam Golden, Treasurer, will review the 2020-2021

budget in detail. I would like to offer a few observations about our synagogue finances.

- Regarding the 2019-2020 fiscal year ending on June 30th:
  - We are forecasting a small profit for the fiscal year. This is because the lower costs associated with being shut down were a little greater than our reductions in revenue. And the months preceding the pandemic were strong.
  - The above number includes refunds to Preschool parents covering 50% of tuition for the last seven weeks of the school year. We were able to do this given the financial health of our synagogue. These refunds were appreciated by our Preschool families.
  - While not visible in our financials we applied for and received a loan from the Payroll Protection Protection (PPP) which we are using to pay payroll and other allowed expenses. This loan was important for us to receive as it enabled us to retain all our employees and it freed up cash that we would have spent otherwise that we will need to use in 2020-2021. Based on what we know about the PPP provisions, we expect to obtain loan forgiveness and not have to repay it.
  
- Regarding the new fiscal year 2020-2021 starting July 1st:
  - I am pleased to report the results of our current Sustaining Share Campaign (SSFC). Our pledge drive officially ended on June 11th. While some pledges are still coming in, and those who don't pledge will receive a "provisional" invoice as usual, I am very gratified to report the following:
    - 82% of member households made their pledge during the campaign. As a point of reference, last year 71% had pledged by the campaign's end date and 83% by the end of June.
    - In addition, the sum of pledges from those who have pledged is approximately 3% higher than last year.
    - Due to members continuing to embrace the match made available by a very generous Shomrei family, we maxed out and are able to use all \$36,300 made available to us.
    - Our Volunteer Security Fund has exceeded the donations it took in the prior year.

I have been amazed by the generosity of the Shomrei community. We understand that we are in a challenging time which has impacted the ability to give by some. It is heartening to see members embrace our voluntary dues model and give what they have the capacity to give. This pledge drive has shown the commitment of our members to Shomrei and the confidence they have in us as an institution.

- Although we had a great response to our pledge campaign, this coming year will be a

very challenging one for Shomrei. Why?

- The first reason is continued uncertainty as a result of COVID-19. The budget presented to you today reflects *what we already know* about the coming year and what we think has the *highest probability* of occurring. We understand that things are fluid and that we will need to reforecast our financials more frequently than in past years, as the fiscal year unfolds and things become more certain.
- The second reason is that, because of significant restrictions on our synagogue life and school due to the virus, we will have both lower revenue (e.g. due to required reduced preschool class sizes) and higher expenses (e.g. the hiring of a cleaning service for nightly cleaning). This means that the budget being presented today reflects an operating loss for the year. Importantly, we will be able to cover this loss with cash in our accounts because we received funds from the PPP program to cover salaries and utilities in May, June and July. Therefore we do not expect to have to turn to the capital campaign or any other source to cover this loss.
- Despite these financials for this upcoming year - which are put upon us by the pandemic - the underlying health of the synagogue remains strong and we are well positioned for the future.

I am deeply appreciative of the work that Bela Schwartz, Pam Golden, John Lasiter and Miriam Haimes have done on this budget.

### **Education (submitted by Heather Brown)**

While certainly an unusual ending for the Preschool and JLC, this year leaves us with much to celebrate!

Community:

- Preschool families enjoyed many community-building events, many of which were coordinated by the PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization, led by Romy Rost and Margot Laksin). From challah baking to a holiday toy gift wrap drive, families gathered together outside of school hours to build connections with one another. Jammies and Jeans, our Friday night early Shabbat gathering for preschool families continued to be a great way to connect with the Rabbi, Morah Lily, and Morah Heather in the sanctuary.
- Hinei Mah Tov, our family service for JLC families once a month on Shabbat morning, really hit its stride. Families attended dutifully and enjoyed multi-age learning and modeling, with our older students helping to lead parts of the service, helping our youngest students to be excited for what's to come! Led by Morah Lily, we saw growth and excitement from this program this year.

- Art Mazel Tov was our reinvented Preschool Fundraiser that joined together the annual Shomrei gala dinner and the Preschool Art Auction into one beautiful night. Headed by Romy Rost, the event celebrated Shomrei's stars and allowed the Preschool to raise \$10k in funds via a silent and live auction. It was a wonderful way to show the strength of our community and break down silos within the congregation and greater community.
- STORM continued to provide an outlet for the teens of Shomrei, who meet regularly by age group (older vs younger students) to learn and socialize together under the direction of Morah Aylah. Teens tackled difficult social justice issues with great maturity, and we will continue to navigate these topics in the year to come.

#### School Statistics:

- Preschool 2019-20 end of year enrollment: 61 students
- Preschool 2020-21 current limited enrollment (due to COVID-19 restrictions): 34 students (nearly at capacity)
- JLC 2019-20 end of year enrollment: 51 students
- JLC 2020-21 (registration not yet open for the upcoming school year) anticipated enrollment: 58 students

#### Preschool During Quarantine

- The Preschool closed on Fri, March 13<sup>th</sup>, with the intention to remain closed through Passover, which was later extended to remain closed for the entire school year (per the Governor's executive order). We immediately began providing programming for all currently enrolled families via Zoom. Our goal was to create as much normalcy and continuity as possible. Families enjoyed weekly music with our music teacher, an all-school Shabbat led by Morah Heather, and individual class Zooms several times each week. In addition, teachers produced videos to inspire a variety of activities, and the school worked its way through weekly themes that brought creativity, imaginary trips to Israel, and levity during a stressful time.

#### JLC During Quarantine

- JLC teachers found their stride virtually, and we tweaked our offerings to best suit the needs of our students over the weeks we were closed. Morah Lily hosted JLC tefillah sessions on Wednesday afternoons and Friday (pre-Shabbat) for our JLC community. Students attended enthusiastically, and we continued our tefillah and Hebrew instruction in a seamless fashion. Students were eager to stay connected, and we feel like learning progress and goals were attained, even in a virtual environment.

#### President Thank You's

- To Rabbi Greenstein for his caring and leadership.
- To the Shomrei Board for their dedication with a special shout out to outgoing Board members Fern Heinig and Lynne Kurzweil.
- To Miriam Haimes for taking on the job as our next president - without the knowledge that we were entering a pandemic.
- To the Shomrei Education team of Heather Brown, Lily Lucey and Aylah Winter

whose professionalism, dedication and love for our kids have never been clearer.

- To Lisa Zelentz for running this place during difficult times.
- And to all the volunteers of Shomrei. It is inspiring to have so many of us dedicate our time and resources, in different ways, to this community and make Shomrei happen. Our commitment runs deep.

It has been a privilege serving as your president. This is a great institution and community, with a long history and a bright future. The past two years have gone by very fast. I look forward to continuing on the Board as immediate past president.

Submitted: June 18, 2020

By: Sara Ann Erichson, President

**Congregation Shomrei Emunah Slate of Officers and Nominations to  
the Board of Trustees 2020-2021**

President: **Miriam Haimes**

Immediate Past Past President: Sara Ann Erichson

Executive Vice President: Pam Golden

VP, Buildings & Grounds: Michael Legman

VP, Education: Adrienne Shulman Lasiter

VP, Finance: Bela Schwartz

VP, Legal: Gordon Braverman

VP, Membership: Gail Stocks

VP, Programming: Liza Cohn

Treasurer: Pam Golden

Recording Secretary: Beryl Hiller

Corresponding Secretary: Jerilyn Margulies

Trustees (terms expiring 2023)

**Romy Rost**

Carol Katzman

Dan Winter

Eric Feldman

Trustees (terms expiring 2022)

Geoff Sadow

**Audrey Levitin**

Allison Task

Shana Rubin

Trustees (terms expiring 2021)

Marc Chalom

John Lasiter

David Brooks

Dawn Berman