

# Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation

## Congregational Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2020

### Attendance

A list of most of those present can be found in Addendum A

### Agenda

- Call to order, blessing, and approval of minutes from our June 2020 Congregational Meeting
- D'var Torah (Rabbi Holzman)
- President's Report (Eric Eisenstadt)
- Financial, capital campaign, participation, security updates (Stu Dornfeld; Sam Schwall; Joe Miller)
- Clergy Reports (Rabbi Holzman, Rabbi Wainer, Cantor Caro)
- Nominating Committee Presentation of 2021 Slate (Eric Forman)
- Vote (Eric Eisenstadt)
- New Committee representation on the board (Risa May)
- Benediction (Cantor Caro)

### Meeting Minutes

Eric Eisenstadt called the meeting to order and Rabbi Holzman led the blessing for leadership.

#### **Motion: Approve the minutes from the June 2020 Congregational Meeting.**

Don Hirsch made the motion to approve minutes from the June 2020 meeting.

Jim Kranzberg seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands.

Rabbi Holzman gave the D'var Torah (a D'var Chanukah) about coming through the darkness and preparing to move forward.

Eric Eisenstadt framed the agenda for the rest of the meeting and expressed gratitude to the clergy, staff, and lay leaders he has worked with over the past two years as NVHC President.

Stu Dornfeld, Treasurer, gave a financial report. Membership has held steady this year which is good considering the pandemic. Our expenses have been less but our income will also be less. We expect to end the year in a deficit but the PPP loan will cover the deficit once it is forgiven and removed from the liability column.

Sam Schwall, VP of Strategic Development talked about the Capital Campaign. The goal of raising funds through a Capital Campaign is to be able to implement the strategic plan. The objective is to raise \$3million to reduce the debt of mortgage and increase operating funds as

well as improve building access and meeting spaces. The plan was going to launch the campaign in the spring of 2020 with small meetings. These meetings had to be put on hold b/c of COVID. In the pre-launch, over \$1.5 million dollars was pledged from 42 families and over \$700,000 in cash has been collected. \$635k of that money has been made to make a payment against the mortgage. This effort has freed up \$45k/year so far. There is the potential to free up \$151k per year if we pay off the whole mortgage. Families will be asked to donate. Sam is enthusiastic about the future success of the campaign.

Joe Miller, Executive Director, reported on engagement/participation. Engagement has been high. Over 85% of the congregation participated in some aspect of High Holidays. Over 100 non-members participated and in the process donated \$5,000. Feedback received was positive and we ultimately met our budget goal in this area due to reduced expenses and the generosity of congregants through the High Holiday appeal.

Friday night services are drawing 75-100 participants on a regular basis. Choir concert attracted over 100 people and the Speaker Series has also been popular. Being on Zoom has allowed people to join us who wouldn't normally be able to.

Joe also reported on the DHS Security Grant. We have a 2 year window to use the funds. We should be ready to start spending money in the second quarter of 2021. On the list of anticipated upgrades are: adding cameras, replacing the outdated phone system, enhancing windows and doors; and improving the security barrier between the two halves of the building.

Rabbi Holzman introduced/framed the clergy reports. Usually the clergy plan 8 months ahead. This past March that changed to an eight *day* planning horizon which stayed with them for a while. They have been agile which has been possible through strong clergy, staff, and lay leadership partnerships. Rabbi Holzman looks forward to expressing gratitude to NVHC leadership at the Jan. 8th board installation.

Cantor Caro talked about a greater need to cultivate a spiritual lens to help get through this time. People are connecting in new, more vulnerable ways, from their homes which has had a positive impact. NVHC has had amazing worship experiences tied to, but not bound by traditional liturgy, including art, music, and meditation. New possibilities were envisioned for the B'nai Mitzvah experience including congregants learning to create sacred space for housing the Torah scrolls in their own homes. We must learn and grow from all of this.

Rabbi Wainer talked about Kehillat Limmud, Tamid, and youth engagement. NVHC closed for only one Sunday following the shutdown in order to transition onto an online platform. A lot was learned about how to provide online learning for our youth. While registration is down, NVHC is on par with schools across the country.

Some positives from this year include:

- 1st and 2nd graders can start Hebrew earlier through a program called Hebrew through movement).

- Small class sizes 10-12 in a class.
- 4 different electives.

For Tamid there have been new opportunities for the over 40 students enrolled. They have continued online with everything from game and movie nights to serious discussions.

Rabbi Wainer also highlighted the Shabbat Yom Hodu program featuring artist Adena Polen which attracted more than 40 NVHC families who came together to make Modin maps--gratitude maps.

Rabbi Wainer is now looking towards what comes next? Do we continue with the traditional model (Sundays and midweek) or do we move the program to Shabbat? How can we engage with the whole family and not just the students. Our new project (mishpacha project) to engage families is one example of something NVHC is trying.

Rabbi Holzman closed out the clergy reports. Our vision has stayed the same but what does "spiritual home" mean when we are not in our building. We will continue to ask this question for the next six months to a year. There are forces pulling us that want us to go back to "business as usual" as quickly as possible. What will we lose if we do that? The past 8 months have shown us what we can be. They have shown us that the problems we face as a world are deeper than we thought. We cannot go backwards and pursue business as usual. We need to change. We are creating a new Judaism in which our main hurdle is how we are limited by our imagination. He is asking the congregation-- participate with us with an open mind as we try to figure out how to go forward.

Rabbi Holzman also talked about the rent moratorium and the importance of our interfaith work. People will get evicted because they don't know how to access available money. People are needed to go through a 1 hour training and should contact Rabbi Holzman if they want to be part of this effort.

Eric Forman, Chair of the 2020 nominating committee, thanked the other members of the nominating committee (E. Ranard, L. Folb, A. Sleeper, R. Coelho) and then presented the nominating slate. It was explained that Sam Schwall will be holding two positions because the VP of Strategic Development position will be a smaller role as the pandemic continues to present challenges to the Capital Campaign.

**Motion: To accept and approve the slate of new Trustees.**

Ken Laskey made the motion.

Ed Byrne seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the new Trustees was unanimous.

Eric Forman read out the names and positions of those being nominated for Officer positions.

**Motion: To accept and approve the slate of new Officers.**

David Goldberger made the motion.

Arnie Small seconded the motion.

The vote to approve the new Officers was unanimous.

Risa May explained how the other representatives to the board become trustees including those representing NVHC's Auxiliary groups and the role of immediate past president. The bylaws also allow for 3 additional Trustees-- chairs of three committees or designees chosen by committee chairs and approved by the board.

The Governance committee suggests that these seats be filled by priority as to support the strategic plan. NVHCs additional priorities for 2021 and the committees which will represent them are:

- Safely and responsibly respond to the pandemic- Pandemic Response Committee, Chaired by Jay Silverberg
- Education/Youth Engagement- Chair to be named soon
- Commitment to develop new leaders- to be filled by Rachel Ingber, representing the Social Action Committee

Risa is thrilled to welcome all of the new trustees.

Cantor Caro closed the meeting with a benediction.

The meeting was adjourned.

## **Addendum A: Congregational Meeting Attendees 12/13/20**

Rabbi Michael Holzman  
Rabbi Jessica Wainer  
Cantor Susan Caro  
Exec. Director, Joe Miller

Alison Behar  
Sally Brodsky  
Ed Byrne  
Sandee Byrne  
Gail Dezube  
Stu Dornfeld  
Eric Eisenstadt  
Bess Eisenstadt  
Eric Elridge  
Bob Fenster  
Carol Flicker  
Lisa Folb  
Debbie Friedman  
Elliot Friedman  
Eric Forman  
Ben Galison  
David Goldberger  
Mort Goldstrom  
Fay Gubin  
Halterman-Mitchell Family  
Louise Hershkowitz  
Carla Heymsfeld  
David Heymsfeld  
Don Hirsch  
Rachel Ingber  
Bruce Johnson  
Valerie Kerns  
Jill Klein  
Jim Kranzberg  
Andrew Lacher  
Elizabeth Lacher  
John Lertzman  
Barbara Leven  
Janis Linkov-Johnson  
Michael Lipsky  
Risa May  
Robyn Mehlenbeck

Ira Merin  
Sandy Mitchell  
Judy Naiman  
Peggy Nelson  
Marianne Newcomb  
Jen Nisoff  
Jim Olkin  
Meryl Paskow  
Howard Perlstein  
L. Platt  
Ellen Ranard  
Paula Rubinoff  
Ellen Ruge  
Robert Ruge  
Ruth Ruttenberg  
Sam Schwall  
Roberta Sherman  
Jay Silverberg  
Sleeper Family  
Arnold Small  
Susan Trivers  
Lauryn Watanabe  
Mark Weinstein  
Howard Wesoky  
Stuart Williger