

# Shir Ami Board of Directors Meeting



## Board Minutes

June 13, 2023

Attendance: Beth McAleese, Helen Berman, Rabbi Briskin, Jason Cohen, Rabbi Eric Goldberg, Stephanie Kravatz, Marc Luber, Phil Nordlinger, Ellen Rawicz, Meryl Reis, Andy Salsman, Ellie Short, Michael Smolen, Jon Stevens, Brandon Weiss

Guests: NA

Absent: Brett Cohen, Jeffrey Cohen, Jared Fingerman

### I. Welcome & Remarks

- Approval of 4-13-2023 minutes – approved (with addition of person who seconded budget approval (first not needed as it came out of committee)
- Sign-ups for D'Var, B. Mitzvah, Shabbat Announcements, dinners were circulated
- Reports on ShirBoard drive under ShirBoard 2023-2024>June 2023
- Dvar Torah – Rabbi Briskin
  - Ted Lasso lessons (Be like a goldfish – 10 second memory, etc.), optimism, focus on what's right and possible
- Ice Breakers– 2 truths and a lie
  - Best/worst thing about Shir Ami or what you expected/what was disappointing

### II. Board Orientation

- Board name cards distributed
- Sunshine fund explained
- Tzedakah – collect monthly and give to cause at end of year
- First Golf Outing successful
- Board members are ambassadors to congregations, greet people, attend most social/learning events
- Constitution –
  - At Large board members can serve maximum 3 - 2 year terms
  - Officers can serve 2 - 2 year terms – unless become president

- Board members are expected to attend 80% of board meetings – let Stephanie know if not attending
  - Every board member is expected to give personally meaningful financial contribution to inspire others
  - Board member reviews (?)
  - 15 board members – need 2/3 to vote
- The Tent – synagogue resource (<https://thetent.urj.org>)
- Committees
  - Mandatory Committees
  - Optional Committees
  - Others?
  - Need to restructure pre-school committee
  - Need Youth Committee
  - Need Investment Committee – establish policies
  - Review a couple of committees each month?
- URJ will meet with us re: strategic board
  - Then we will set strategic direction
- Bring policy or two to board each month on rotating basis
- 1-2 goals for board in next 1-2 years
  - Get more people involved in committees
  - Task force on building – structure, entrances, how it looks
  - Get people to participate more actively
  - Overarching committees, with sub committees – like education as overarching – ELC, RS, Lifelong Learning subs
  - Coordinate fundraising
  - Coordinate/integrate calendar – events step on each other
  - Men's Club – relevance, what can it be?
    - Send board members to Men's Club Meetings (like was done for WOSA)
  - In August, look at policy on auxiliaries re: non-member membership/event fees
  - Better use of technology – efficiency, access
  - Office staff – better ambassadors
  - Affiliation fee schedule – does it work?, can we make affiliation more attractive?
    - Phil compared our fee structures to 25-30 local synagogues – we're in the middle for most things
    - Empty nesters fees?
    - Senior cut-off (many more still working)
    - Task force
  - Retention

### **III. Personnel Committee- Stephanie & Jon**

- Want to increase size of committee (1 board member and 2 non-board members)
- Jon talking to Heather Boatman (HR at Burlington Coat Factory)
- Establish charter and procedures, who does review, how often, when comes back to board

#### **IV. Policy Update – Restricted Funds – Jon Stevens**

#### **V. Executive Director's Report**

- Sink hole on back driveway, evaluated today – sewer drainage issue
- Installed 9 more security cameras – eyes almost everywhere (not FLC, Mikveh, restrooms, technologies)
- Doorways lettered/numbered inside and outside
- Will renumber classrooms in ELC to make them match outside numbers
- \$1.2 million to buy Treasury notes (now worth 1,209,000)
- Interviewed candidate for Program Director
  - will meet with Stephanie for final approval
  - start mid-July or August,
  - candidate's child is in the infant center, younger
  - some experience – marketing Jewish National Fund and Haddassah,
  - Opportunity for growth
  - big personality – engaging
- Committee sign-ups

#### **VI. Closing Prayer – Rabbi Goldberg**

- Be aware and overcome bias, encourage tolerance & community

# BOARD REPORT- CLERGY/STAFF

**NAME:** Eric Goldberg

**DATE:** Board Meeting 6/13 (Good date for a Synagogue Meeting!)

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE:** Rabbi/Director of Education

Please provide a summary for the board of what you have been up to since the last meeting. Please include an update on your goals when relevant or indicate activity pertaining to your goals. Bullet points are fine.

## Religious School Update

1. Religious School: Our Religious School year concluded on Wednesday May 24th. Our concluding Sunday of the Religious School year (May 21st) was a true celebration, with an extended Tefillah/Song Session/Teacher & Madrichim Appreciation. We also enjoyed ice cream and the always crowd pleasing Teachers Getting Pied in the Face event as part of our morning. We had a wonderful year filled with fun, connecting to each other and learning. Our students and families deepened their understanding of living a Jewish life, Torah and Israel (the people, land and country). An incredibly from the heart 'todah rabbah' to our teachers and madrichim, Ellen Rawicz and the Religious School Committee (Rachel Bressler, Natalie Cohen, Erica Esposito and Stacey Salsman), the countless parent volunteers, Rabbi, Cantor, Ferne, Shanika and all of those who made our Religious School year run smoothly and feel like family.
2. Looking ahead to the 2023-2024 school year, Religious School Registration will go out to all families this week and will be 100% online. Todah Rabbah to Jodi Friedman for taking care of many of the details in updating the form.
3. Speaking of the year ahead, I have already spoken with several families who are planning to enroll their children in Religious School who were not in Religious School last year. Some of those families are from our ELC and/or are already Shir Ami members. Others are coming from locations both near and far. Several families have also visited Shir Ami over the past couple of months and it has been my pleasure to give them a tour/speak with them about our school program.
4. Planning is also well underway for 2023-2024. I am setting up meetings with teachers, going out into the community to connect with local organizations that we can partner with as part of our continued efforts to get our students/families to

engage in mitzvot throughout they year ahead (and beyond) and speaking with folks in Israel about ways in which we can connect as well.

5. We are moving forward with our Shabbat dinners at the synagogue that 'feel like you are having Shabbat at someone's home.' Todah Rabbah to our Religious School Committee for bringing this idea to the forefront. The idea is to have dinner (with some, or all, being potluck) for 2-3 grade levels at a time (depending on enrollment numbers). Everyone can dress casually (maybe wear white) and we will work together with SHAFTY leadership (Ferne and the teens) to create a 'prayer experience' that incorporates a song, movement and fun! By creating a 'camp-style' experience (Shabbat blessings, upbeat songs that are timely, etc.), we seek to teach Shabbat traditions and allow families (adults and kids) to connect with each other in a relaxed, comfortable environment.
6. Ferne, Rabbi, Cantor Berlin and I are working together to revamp our 6th-10th grade program in one significant way: we are going to create experiences both inside and out of the classroom that allow our students to: 1. learn about, and engage in, tikkun olam, 2. meet other teens from our area and 3. develop leadership skills that will serve them well both in the coming years at Shir Ami and beyond.
7. Discussions have taken place between myself and our Religious School Committee regarding Hebrew curriculum (of which there are many opinions). Those discussions will be ongoing for the next couple of months and will also include input from Rabbi and Cantor.
8. On Wednesday 5/17, we had a program led by Jason Holtzman, Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), and others for teens and their parents focusing on what is happening on college campuses and how to respond both before going to college and once on campus. The program was well received and we would like have this group back with us in the future.

## **Lifelong Learning (LLL) Update**

- a. On Thursday April 27th, we had our final Israeli Book Club of the 2022-2023 year: Noa Tishby's 'Israel: A Simple Guide to the Most Misunderstood Country on Earth' led by me. The event was well attended and the discussion was spirited. Participants were able to share their opinions/thoughts in an open and honest way, which is the one of the goals of what we would like to achieve.

- b. On May 25th, we had our Shavuot Night of Learning. Todah Rabbah to Rabbi Briskin, Cantor Kohlbrenner and Rabbi Paula for leading us in learning and the reading of the Ten Commandments. It was an honor for me to teach with, and learn from, this esteemed group. Another well attended event in which people had the opportunity to learn about Jewish tradition and engage with each other in a true mitzvah — studying on Shavuot. The food, whether homemade or brought from a store, was delicious and in keeping with Shavuot theme of dairy delights!
- c. Looking ahead, Rabbi, Cantor, myself and others are putting the 2023-2024 Lifelong Learning schedule together. Please let me know if there is anything you would like for us to do!

## **Additional Items**

1. Continue to make daily birthday and anniversary calls.
2. Continued pastoral care calls, emails and texts
3. Officiated at life cycle events.
4. It was an honor to attend and speak at the Circle of Giving Event at Harriet and Jerry Paley's home. As I said to the group that morning, what is most important to me is that Shir Ami is a family with a big heart that is there for each other in good times and challenging ones and that seeks to support each other each and every day.
5. The band had a wonderful time being part of Cantor Kohlbrenner's L'hitraot Service. As always, it was a true joy to play together and the practices leading up to the event were another great way for Shir Ami family members to connect with each other.
6. There is not enough space to write about the Shir Ami Golf Outing on May 15, 2023. There is not a big enough Todah Rabbah that I could say to everyone who made the day so special. From Brett, Mark and Todd to Barbara, Jackie, Linda and Randi to Ferne, Phil and Rabbi to Philmont to our sponsors and players. It was an amazing day in which we had fun, connected with each other, got to see old friends and make new ones, and raised a significant amount of money to help Shir Ami. Let's do it again next year!
7. Walking/Running group continues.  
As always, do not hesitate to be in touch should you have any questions or want to know more. I can best be reached via phone/text (856-359-5758) and/or email ([egoldberg@shiramipa.org](mailto:egoldberg@shiramipa.org))

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

Nothing specific, but please know that we would love to see board members any time at Religious School! Thank you for all of your support!

## MONTHLY BOARD REPORT

**NAME:** Ken Standig

**DATE:**

6-11-2023

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE:** Buildings & Grounds

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you and/or your committee have been up to since the last meeting.**

**Bullet points are fine.**

Since March 2023 report:

- Participated in several review meetings to finalize the draft of the EAP (Emergency Action Plan).
- Reported on Buildings & Grounds/Security activities to the Annual Meeting.
- Contacted Newtown FD regarding exit door designations, scheduling fire drills and coordinating with PD for other training.
- Initiated discussion of security guard policy – when to require?
- Initiated discussion of Jewish Climate Coalition.

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

- Follow up meeting on completing EAP.
- Schedule meeting on security guard policy.
- Scheduling emergency response training sessions for staff and congregants.
- Schedule regular B&G committee meetings.
- Establish new security procedures for upcoming HH services.

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

None.

**If you have any documents that you would like to include with your report, please email them with this form.**

None.



# **JUNE BOARD REPORT**

**NAME: Meryl Reis**

**DATE: 6/12/2023**

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE: Circle of Giving Committee**

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you and/or your committee have been up to since the last meeting. Bullet points are fine.**

Successful brunch was held for high category donors at the home of Harriet & Jerry Paley on Sunday June 4, 2023. 23 people attended. Thanks to Harriet & Jerry for offering their home for the event. Thank you, Debbie Stevens, Phil and Rabbi Eric with your help for the event. At the event we spoke about the Circle of Giving fundraising and where the funds go.

This year Circle of Giving raised over \$175,000 and with the recent golf outing, that number grew to over \$215,000, meeting the budget. Thank you to Mark Luber, Brett Cohen, and Todd Leon for making the golf event such a success. Even more impressive is that over the past five years, from FY19 to FY 2023, Circle of Giving raised over \$780,000. Circle of Giving funds have gone to renovate the Family Life Center with new carpet, paint, and fittings. Our kitchen has new appliances, the oven, refrigerator, and freezer. These funds provided our beautiful new Piano in the sanctuary and Circle of Giving funded the live stream for high holiday services. The funds enhance the Jewish education of our children and enables social events such as this year's Purim Spiel Party.

On Friday, June 9, all donors were thanked at Friday night services.

We will meet in July to set a Circle of Giving calendar for next year.

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

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## **BOARD REPORT- CLERGY/STAFF**

**NAME: Rabbi Chuck Briskin**

**DATE: 6/12/2023**

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you have been up to since the last meeting. Please include an update on your goals when relevant or indicate activity pertaining to your goals. Bullet points are fine.**

### **Worship:**

Many end of the program year special services including our celebration of Ferne, Board Installation, Confirmation, and our celebration of Cantor Kohlbrenner.

Led Shabbat services at Ann's Choice (which I usually am invited to do a couple of times a year)

Coordinated a successful Shavuot Program (with Yizkor). Forty people came for a "Night of Speed Learning" led by Rabbi Paula, Rabbi Eric, Cantor Rachel and me" Pot luck blintzes and cheesecake was a hit as well.

Preparing for HHDs. Beth, Andy, and I are meeting before the board meeting to begin looking at honors for this year.

### **Tikkun Olam:**

Nancy Siderits and I represented Shir Ami at the URJ/RAC Day of Action in D.C. on 5/10 where we met with Senator Fetterman and Congressman Fitzpatrick as we launched RAC-National's Climate Justice campaign;

I and four others went to Harrisburg on 6/7 for an action related to Full and Fair Funding for our schools organized by POWER with support from RAC-PA (note that RAC-national and RAC-PA priorities and advocacy efforts are different.

### **Pastoral/Life Cycle:**

Continued calls and visits to individuals and their families dealing with chronic or terminal illness.

Many thanks to Rabbi Eric and Cantor Rachel who helped with three funerals and several shiva minyanim while I was away on vacation. Despite not being here, I was in touch with the families throughout and have been in touch since returning.

Four b.mitzvah (including this weekend's) since last board meeting.

One wedding coming up—the daughter of Diana and Hal Gever (later this month)

### **Connecting:**

Coordinated a Jewish history tour of Phila on 6/11. Intended group was the “culture and outings” small group, but had to expand to fill more spaces. 12 of us went, had an interesting and informative tour and concluded with lunch at Famous on 4<sup>th</sup> deli. (And we all made it within 15 minutes of the start time despite discovering in the morning that I-95 was closed.

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

**Worship:**

This Friday (6/16) is Pride Shabbat. Ettie Petrowski (the mother of two trans children) will be speaking.

Summer Service Schedule has begun. All services this summer will be at 6:30 and will take place in the atrium or outdoors. Working to fill spots for “Kol Ha’kahal—A Voice of the Congregation” where I will invite members to speak on Friday nights throughout the summer. If you are interested in being one of our speakers, please let me know. Rabbi Eric or I will be at service (along with Cantor Berlin, of course)

HHD planning is well under way. We’ve had two meetings to create the schedule of events. Cantor Berlin are working on specifics for the service (and she is meeting with me several times before she officially begins next month).

**Tikkun Olam:**

Working with Andee Losben, Essie Cherkin and Barbara Roth to expand our local organizing committee that will help us focus on advocacy issues that are important to our community (including but not limited to RAC-PA and POWER Bucks initiatives).

Need to circle back with Sarah Sharma about Shir Ami becoming a Welcome Circle for HIAS. Hopefully for to report later this summer.

**Education:**

Working with Rabbi Eric, Ferne, and Cantor Berlin on changes to our post b.mitzvah curriculum and program.

Creating a two-year Confirmation Cycle (to accommodate a very small 10<sup>th</sup> grade class this year.

Calendaring Life Long Learning programs for next year (in coordination with Rabbi Eric).

Three week HHD prep course taught by clergy will be offered in late August/early Sept.

Will be on Faculty at Camp Harlam for one week at the end of June.

**Connecting:**

With Rebecca Kaufman's internship having ended, and without a program director in place yet, I am overseeing (as best I can) Shir Groups. Some groups are more set than others. Hopefully those off to a slow start will be able to convene this summer. Will work to invite folks once again to join. There are some lay leaders in place who are running with some of the groups (Wine, Born in the 50s, Empty Nesters, Bourbon, Shabbat Dinner). Still need to talk to group leaders to assess what has worked, what hasn't, and what needs to be changed/fixed for next year.

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

No

## **JUNE BOARD REPORT**

**NAME: Beth McAleese & Andy Salsman   DATE: 6/13/2023**

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE: Ritual Life Committee**

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you and/or your committee have been up to since the last meeting. Bullet points are fine.**

**-RL has been organizing and preparing for upcoming HHD**

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

**-Meeting on 6/13 with Clergy.**

**-Following up with a plan to meet with the committee targeting July.**

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

**If you have any documents that you would like to include with your report, please email them with this form.**

## **BOARD REPORT- CLERGY/STAFF**

**NAME:** Ferne Levy

**DATE:** June12, 2023

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE:** Youth Director

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you have been up to since the last meeting. Please include an update on your goals when relevant or indicate activity pertaining to your goals. Bullet points are fine.**

- April 15-Sr. Shafty Movie night– A nice intimate group of 9 teens had a Chinese dinner and movie night in the youth lounge
- April 22-6th/7th grade Highway clean up for Earth Day– a successful clean up. 5 teens filled up many bags of trash and then we had yogurt treat from Red Berry
- April 23- Bonim Ultrazone- 9 kids had a fun time
- April 23- Chalutzim Creation Station- 6 kids had a good time painting pottery
- April 23-K2Club Spy Kids Event– 33 kids had fun making their own pizza, designing their very own binoculars and doing other “spy” activities.
- April 27-Sr. Shafty Elections– We have 17 new board members, Nora Eder is our President, and 2 NFTY/PAR board members we keep on as honorary members–Avi Briskin (RCVP) and Chase Behrend (MVP)
- May 7- SHAFTY Installation and Sr. Goodbye dinner (at Shir Ami)- It was a nice celebration including a potluck dinner & desserts, a tribute to our one outgoing senior, and speeches and video culminating our year
- May 24- Old board/New board meeting and end of year BBQ at my house

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

-The planning for next year has already begun

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

# JUNE BOARD REPORT

NAME: Bob Cherkin

DATE: 6/11/23

TITLE OR COMMITTEE: DEI Update

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you and/or your committee have been up to since the last meeting. Bullet points are fine.**

During the month of May, I had conversations with Rabbi Briskin, Rabbi Eric, Phil, Stephanie, Ellie and Jon (Stevens). The discussions helped me start to understand where Shir Ami is related to DEI and where we want to go.

As a result, I sent an email to the DEI Committee, as well as all of the people cited above. The contents of that email are highlighted below.

(If you would like to be added to the DEI distribution list, please email me.)

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

**JUNE IS PRIDE MONTH...and SHIR AMI PRIDE SHABBAT** will take place on **6/16/23**. Rabbi Briskin has arranged an impactful program for us all.

If you would like to help support our LGBTQ neighbors, young and old alike, please go to [action.pavalues.org](https://action.pavalues.org). **TAKE ACTION!!! HELP PROVIDE LGBTQ NONDISCRIMINATION PROTECTIONS.** This website will help you identify your PA Legislator so you can forward an already formatted email to them to express your support.

A Langhorne area church has opened a branch of **Rainbow Room**, a safe gathering place for LGBTQIA+ teens. Unfortunately, a group of protestors from an area Baptist Church has been verbally abusing the teens and their supporters. Staff at Rainbow Room are coordinating volunteers to help support the teens on site.

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## **June BOARD REPORT**

**NAME:** Jeff Cohen

**DATE:** June 12, 2023

**TITLE OR COMMITTEE:** Marketing & Communications

**Please provide a summary for the board of what you and/or your committee have been up to since the last meeting. Bullet points are fine.**

- Exploring and building proposal for Shir Ami SWAG store
- Committee to collaborate with Phil to deliver follow up exit interviews for members who resign

**Please list and describe any upcoming initiatives and/or events.**

- We will present about the member cohorts and personas to the Men's Club at their next leadership meeting at the end of June

**Are there any items that the board needs to discuss or actions that the board needs to take at this time? If so, please specify the question, topic and/or required action.**

- Input about any committees that would like to further discuss the member cohorts and personas to improve programming, marketing and communications

**If you have any documents that you would like to include with your report, please email them with this form.**

At the next meeting, I'd like to present a proposal for a SWAG store in the fall.

## **BOARD REPORT- CLERGY/STAFF**

**NAME: Rabbi Chuck Briskin**

**DATE: 6/12/2023**

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No

Essie Cherkin  
Barbara Roth co-chairs

June 12, 2023

## **Tikkun Olam Committee June Report**

### Feeding the Homeless

Our committee has been focused on feeding the homeless. Since the beginning of March, we've been providing lunches through the generosity of our members to those in need who spend time at the Pennadel Center's Reach Out Foundation.

Approximately 20 people visit the center for services that include meals, counseling, laundry facilities, and personal showers. The Church of God's Love has been providing 3 meals a day for quite a while and reached out for some help. We agreed to help with lunch on Wednesdays.

Every Wednesday, Shir Ami volunteers deliver donations that include sandwiches or casseroles, fruit, dessert and non-alcoholic beverages. The individual donations are then gathered and delivered by noon each Wednesday by another volunteer.

We are fortunate to have Jodie Levinson create, edit and circulate the Sign Up Genius that has been a great way to keep track of our volunteers and to know if additional help is needed.

We hope you've noticed a wooden structure on the bypass side driveway that was created as a Boy Scout Merit Badge project by Braedon Boatman. The structure houses a vegetable garden that requires watering and care. Braedon and his family, who are members, will be moving to California and need volunteers to continue tending to the garden. Braedon's goal is for the vegetable garden to enrich our Food Bank and address food insecurity in our area.

We asked Braedon to write-up his project and we are waiting for that to publish in the Shiron. A local landscaper assisted him with the technical aspects. We need to confirm that information.

### Education Advocacy

5 Shir Ami members supported the RAC initiative for Fair Funding and Education supports by traveling to Harrisburg on Wednesday, June 7th. The day included appointments to speak with local state representatives.

### Racial Justice Book Club

The Racial Justice Book Club met at Shir Ami on Thursday, 5/18. The two books reviewed were "One Drop" and "Jews of Color." We had a few more people in-person than we've had on zoom. There have been technical problems with the zoom meetings.

### Caring for Friends

Our congregation has prepared and delivered approximately 300 meals to Caring for Friends.

Along with Len Roth and Bob Cherkin, we attended their end of year appreciation breakfast and learned a more about the organization. A group from Council Rock High School was among those recognized for the exceptional work they do in support of Caring for Friends.

Food Bank activities have continued under the direction of Marc Luber.

Up to:

—We installed our new board on 6/2.

—We hosted bingo on 6/8 with 63 people attending (despite CRHS and PHS graduations)

Upcoming:

—Our first new board meeting is tomorrow, where we will be preparing membership flyers.

—We're working on a prospective member event in late August (hopefully mini-golf)

Discuss (or just share with me)

—How do we coordinate decorating sukkah dates and activities in the sukkah (along with future events?)

—Contact list for board?

—Board meeting schedule?

—Reserving room space at Shir Ami?