

Transition Committee's FAQs (2021 Special Congregational Meeting)

1. How can we afford to hire an executive director and all of the other staff in the plan?

The relationship between policy decisions and finances is always complicated. Temple Beth El's Board of Trustees in general and its presidents and several past presidents in specific, have been functioning as an executive director for years. The real question is how long can we continue to function as an organization relying on these lay-leaders as volunteers, to manage the Temple, which is continuously growing in complexity? Our spiritual and educational aspects are what people see. Being at a crossroads of what do we want to become and change in leadership is the tipping point for transitional change.

The other part of affordability is how will it affect and/or change other staffing? This is really a bigger question of putting together what we need and then looking at how we can afford it. It is anticipated that clergy and staff roles will change and be more based on function. Often we think about the people in these roles now and what will happen to them. Staff are aware that we are retooling what we are going to be doing and are open to change. We do not see losing anyone who wants to still remain a Temple employee.

2. Why aren't we looking at hiring a permanent Rabbi now?

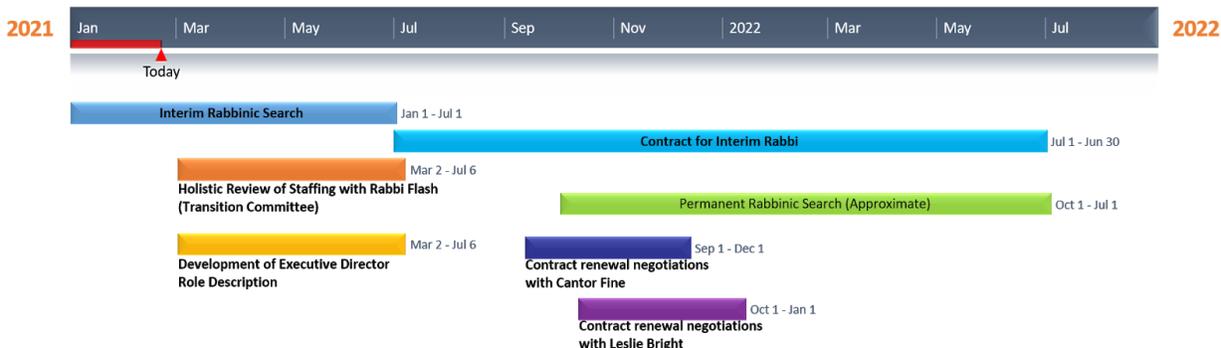
Two main reasons:

1. To allow a time to reflect as a congregation on what we want in a permanent Rabbi; and,
2. Our decision to recruit, in late December 2020, was about 3 months too late. The timeline for recruiting a permanent Rabbi is just after the conclusion of High Holy Days. This allows candidates that are currently employed by another congregation, to communicate her/his intentions to that synagogue. Then that synagogue can act accordingly, including possibly initiating their own Rabbinic search process.

3. How do these decisions affect existing staff such as Cantor, Leslie, Andy, and Rebecca?

The Transition Committee will continue working with Rabbi Flash as a facilitator to reimagine the staffing model and roles for Temple Beth El. The goal of this effort is to explore ways to make sure that the model and the roles of staff align with the values and goals of Temple Beth El as expressed by the community in the report prepared by Rabbi Flash. After this effort, we may be proposing a very different model or the same model that we currently have. It is possible that we will maintain the same staff, but redefining some of the roles that they currently have.

4. What is the timeline?



5. How does the congregation get to approve these decisions?

Transition Team & Current Recommendations:

The Temple Beth El by-laws (available upon request from the TBE office) set out our board system, standing committee system and congregational voting. For the process of Transition, the president created a team, to research this need. Through this process, the team has worked in collaboration with staff, the board of directors and a hired consultant (Rabbi Flash), with guidance from the Union of Reform Judaism. This team reports and offers recommendations to the board, who then approves moving forward in these decisions.

Interim Rabbi:

Once the recommendation to hire an interim rabbi has been made and voted on, the president identifies a chair for the standing committee (identified in the by laws) for a Rabbinical Search Committee and this committee is subsequently filled with members of the community. The committee works with CCAR, following guidelines for this process.

Full Time, Permanent Clergy:

If and when the decision is made to pursue a fulltime clergy, the search committee will be re-tasked with the new process of a Rabbinical search. Once a candidate has been identified and vetted, the congregation will have the opportunity to vote on this in a congregational meeting.

6. What is an executive director and what would they do?

There are three major aspects of an Executive Director’s role:

Operational: The ED manages the work of temple staff engaged in administrative and maintenance duties, maintains the master calendar, and manages the maintenance of the buildings and grounds. They also maintain membership lists and the various modes of communication with temple membership.

Financial: Manages expenditures within the budgetary framework, payroll, and external contracts.

External: Manages contacts and contracts with external bodies: Police, fire department, rentals, contractors, and vendors. They might also write grant applications and produce reports.

Why is this role necessary for Temple Beth El:

In any organization, there is a **daily** need for decision making by someone with authority. Minor and major “stuff” always happens that require decisions.

At TBE, there is no one with that role. The default is the President of the Board or volunteers on committees that meet infrequently. Or the Board of Trustees. That is not sustainable at best and dysfunctional and unprofessional at worst. Are we trained for such managerial duties?

An Executive Director, who reports to the President and the Board, has that role. They also advise the Board on the many matters that they manage. They would also be involved in creating the vision for the congregation and work with the President/Board and Clergy in order to make sure the decisions made support that vision.

Note: The educational functions of a temple usually report to the clergy, not the Executive Director. However, the Executive Director still tracks budgets and some other religious school functions.

7. What is an interim Rabbi and their function?

When congregations are in transition and find themselves without a rabbi, like when they retire, hiring an interim rabbi can be very helpful to a congregation choosing a permanent rabbi. The interim rabbi has special training to create the opportunity for congregations to clarify what they are looking for based on their current reality and prepare the congregation and the new permanent rabbi for a successful placement. Their skills help congregations hire toward the future. This role is inherently transitional with the goal of supporting congregations to hire a permanent rabbi. This means that the interim is not a candidate for the permanent position.

8. Why can't Rabbi Kadden or Rabbi Flash act as Interim Rabbi next year?

Interim rabbis are identified by the CCAR and hired for very specific duties. To utilize the resources of the CCAR, a congregation must choose from a CCAR recommended pool. Rabbi Kadden serves as our Rabbi Emeritus, this function and relationship with a congregation has recommendations that are also outlined by the CCAR and reinforced by a contract that was developed by Rabbi Kadden, the president and voted on by the board. The scope of interim rabbi is not in line with nor does it honor an emeritus role.

9. Why can't Cantor Fine continue as sole/senior clergy through the next year?

Much of a traditional rabbi's duties have fallen to Cantor Fine, as he is serving as our Senior Clergy while still working as our Cantor. Although a combination of efforts from Temple leadership, staff, and rabbinic intern Nina King-Madlem has helped Cantor manage an overwhelming number of tasks, the juggling of these important positions is a very imposing task. The Transition Team and the Board of Trustees concluded that the best course of action is to hire a rabbi on an interim basis, given the uncertainty of hiring a clergy person during a pandemic. The search for an interim rabbi, if successful, will result in the easing of the Cantor's role of dual clergy for one year while we then search for a permanent rabbi and a longer-term contract. This will allow Cantor Fine to gain necessary and invaluable clergy support, so that he can focus more on his cantorial duties.

10. Can we hire a rabbinic student if the search committee does not find a suitable candidate?

The short answer is yes. Under the CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis) Rabbinic Placement Commission rules, a newly ordained rabbi can serve as the Senior/Solo rabbi of a congregation with fewer than 300 members (what CCAR calls a size A congregation). However, if the rabbinic student is not receiving their ordination from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Since CCAR searches are exclusive, and only CCAR members or HUC-JIR students may apply for positions listed with us, if you wanted to hire a student rabbi receiving their ordination elsewhere, you would have to close our search first.

Our current Rabbinic Student Intern, Nina King-Madlem will not be ordained for two more years. Therefore, she cannot be considered an eligible candidate for Temple Beth El's search.

11. When will we know for certain that a rabbi has been hired (or not been found)?

The Transition Team has recruited a Rabbinic Search Committee (RSC) consisting of 15 Temple Beth EL congregants that are a representative cross section of our congregation. Under the leadership of chair Jim Friedman, they have been engaged with in-depth training for their committee responsibilities. As a group they wrote and submitted the detailed application required by CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis) to request candidates for TBE's open position. The RSC started, this past Sunday, reviewing the professional resumes that have been received so far.

Noting the above process is in progress, it is hoped that the RSC will be able to make a recommendation to the Temple Board of Trustees so that an Interim Rabbi can begin a

one-year contract on July 1, 2021. If this is not the case, this will be reported at the annual congregational meeting on May 18, 2021

Shortly after the High Holy Days 2021 the RSC will submit to CCAR the application for a full-time permanent Rabbi.

12. If I started a generous fund to hire a permanent rabbi, could I persuade you to change your mind?

Let me start by saying that this would be a very generous donation to the community and we would be lucky for this to be the case. We still believe that it is best to hire an interim rabbi at this time for various reasons. We hope that you would understand and be willing to help in our efforts to hire a permanent rabbi the following year. We believe that it would be difficult and not in our best interest to hire a permanent rabbi during the current COVID pandemic and associated restrictions. The CCAR is not allowing potential rabbinic candidates to travel at this time and it is possible that we would need to hire a rabbi with a longer contract without having been able to meet them in person first. It has also been suggested by the CCAR and the URJ to hire an interim rabbi following the retirement of a well-loved long-termed rabbi as is the case at Temple Beth El. Please see the other questions related to an interim rabbi for more information.

13. What are the plans to implement the findings of the report outside of staffing decisions?

The passionate response to this process yielded a wealth of information about what the congregation wants for itself in the coming years, especially the '5 years from now bulletin article' question. If you have not yet read them, I highly encourage it. This information will be disseminated to appropriate committees and to the board for brainstorming and consideration. Most importantly, if you feel passionate about one of these projects, or reading the report has sparked a new idea, contact a board member and they will guide you to the correct person or process to help make it a reality.

14. How much are finances driving or will drive the decisions?

All policy decisions are affected by financial considerations. The Temple Board of Trustees is responsible for approving policy and financial decisions.

Each year the Budget and Finance Committee proposes a budget for the upcoming fiscal year to the Board of Trustees. This proposal is based on a close examination of anticipated income and planned expenditures. Our main expenditures are professional salaries, programming, and the costs of keeping the building functional.

Financial basics:

1. Annually in the spring the Budget and Finance Committee, with input from the Temple clergy, staff, and Board of Trustees is responsible for recommending to the Board a budget based on need.
2. The main source of incoming revenues comes from our membership making an annual commitment (often referred to as dues); service fees and donations.
3. The fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30;
4. At the beginning of each fiscal year, a letter is sent to all family units explaining the current need with an individualized expectation for your household.
5. If a household feels they/it cannot afford what has been asked, contacting either David Nemetz, Temple Treasurer; Jim Friedman, chair of the Budget and Finance Committee; or Andy Mauer, the Temple Administrator is strongly encouraged. All financial information is kept confidential.