



Temple Sinai 2025 Annual Meeting
May 28, 2025

Call to order and Opening Prayer: With a quorum of the congregation present, the meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m. Temple President Ken Jaffe gave a welcome and opening remarks, with an introduction to the meeting format, followed by a song and a prayer led by the clergy team, Senior Rabbi Jonathan Roos, Rabbi Hannah Goldstein, Rabbi Noah Diamondstein, and Senior Cantor Rachel Rhodes.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING:

Standard Business:

- **Presentation and Approval of Parliamentary Rules:** A presentation of the Parliamentary Rules was provided by Parliamentarian D. Jean Veta with an explanation regarding the meeting logistics allowing for public discussion and voting both in-person and electronically, for those attending virtually. This method of conducting the proceedings is consistent with and in the spirit of the Roberts Rules and the Temple By-laws. A motion to approve the Special Rules of Order was approved upon two thirds vote of those in attendance in person and virtually.
- **Review and Approval of Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting:** Temple Sinai Secretary Laura Steel presented the Minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting, which were approved upon motion by in-person and electronic voting.

Reports:

- **President's Report:** Temple Sinai President Ken Jaffe presented his Report, summarizing many of the important events of FY 2024, including recent instances of antisemitism, the financial insecurity and uncertainty surrounding changes in governmental policy. He expressed his personal thoughts about Temple Sinai as an engaged, compassionate, and thriving community that has been a home and vital anchor for so many. He also emphasized the benefits of membership in the synagogue, which continues to serve the community and attract new membership, now totaling 1214 member households. We have made substantial progress toward enhancing our financial position with a new community commitment structure that reflects our core values and cost savings initiatives. Temple Sinai will continue to work to address the financial challenges in the coming years.

Ken also recognized that we are in a period of significant transition. He acknowledged the enormous contributions of the extraordinary clergy team, Temple staff, and the

engaged and invested member volunteers. He highlighted the outstanding tenures of our Executive Director Ellen Agler, Cantorial Soloist Robyn Helzner, and Director of Early Childhood Education, Ali Hurewitz, all of whom were recently celebrated. He also recognized and congratulated Associate Rabbi Noah Diamondstein as he transitions to assume the Senior Rabbi position at Temple Beth El in Hillsborough, New Jersey with gratitude for the past five years during which he shared his wide-ranging talents, scholarship, commitment and enthusiasm that have enriched our worship, learning, and Jewish communal life. Ken also welcomed and introduced Lee Levitt, our new Executive Director and noted the imminent arrival of Melanie Douglass, our incoming Director of Early Childhood Education. He extended gratitude and appreciation to the two search committees for their excellent work.

- **Clergy Report:** Senior Rabbi Jon Roos provided the Clergy's Report and summarized the myriad activities occurring at the synagogue in terms of ritual, life-changing events, celebrations, social action, and learning, showing that Temple Sinai is a vibrant, sacred, and engaged community. While acknowledging that this has been a challenging time based on world events, Rabbi Roos highlighted the numerous joyful and meaningful activities occurring at the Temple and in the schools during the past year. Our synagogue remains a house of worship full of energy, spirit and engagement. Rabbi Roos also extended deepest gratitude to our outgoing President, Ken Jaffe, along with our long-term members and volunteers who make our community thrive. In addition to welcoming our new staff, Rabbi Roos gave a *Shehecheyanu* blessing for our congregation.
- **Executive VP/Financial Report:** Glenn Engelmann, Executive Vice President and Chair of the Finance Committee, presented and summarized the Financial Report, including the work of the Finance Committee and the temple staff, particularly the finance staff. Glenn provided a summary of the 2024-2025 financial results, which were better than projected in the budget, despite the financial headwinds. He explained that this was another challenging year from a financial perspective. Despite these challenges, the Finance Committee projects that we will end the year with an operating surplus of \$375,000, rather than the budgeted deficit. This result was, to a significant degree, the result of better than budgeted Membership Commitment receipts, higher-than-expected interest rates, the continuing allocation from the Sustaining Fund, prudent financial management, and the recent receipt of a government security grant. Glenn also discussed that we closed on a \$4.5 million 10-year loan at a very favorable interest rate to cover the costs of the recent South Addition project, which are expected to be covered by member pledges. We will continue to face financial challenges, which are addressed in the 2025-2026 budget.

Glenn further explained that, while the Temple's financial results improved on budget projections, future operating expenses are nevertheless projected to exceed operating revenues. This will require, in accordance with Temple policy, the release of funds from the Surplus Fund to balance operating budgets. Glenn also noted that releases from the Capital Campaign Sustaining Fund will continue only through fiscal year 2026-27.

- **Annual Report and Strategic Plan:** Craig Iscoe, Co-Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, discussed this year's Annual Report and the wide range of activities that are informed by our core values. The Annual Report focuses on the activities of Committees & Affiliates, the Nursery School, Religious School, and Youth Education, the Honor Our Heritage, Build Our Future Campaign, The Davis Center for Social Justice, Sinai House, a Financial Overview, Appreciating Our Donors and Volunteer Opportunities. The Annual Report has been mailed to the entire congregation and is also available on the Temple's website.

Craig emphasized the importance of the Strategic Plan, which gives guidance to, and is relied on heavily, by the clergy, administration and synagogue committees for planning the direction of Temple Sinai by outlining goals, values and priorities. He summarized the key components of the Strategic Plan in the essential areas comprising the activities and operations of Temple Sinai, which are intended to implement the Core Values statement in the areas of ritual, financial sustainability, education, membership and member engagement, social justice, programming, pastoral care, music, building/grounds, and governance. The 2024-2027 Strategic Plan sets an agenda to guide Temple Sinai's clergy and staff in making decisions about programmatic priorities, Temple leadership in developing the annual budget and effective governance of the congregation, and committee chairs in appropriate deployment of Temple resources. Craig invited input and comments from the Temple Sinai community.

Executive Session: Confidential and personnel matters were discussed in Executive Session. Upon conclusion, the Congregation, upon motion, voted by in-person and electronic voting to approve the proposed contract for Cantor Rebecca Robins in the continuing role of Director of Religious Education.

Action Items:

- **Election of Trustees, Officers, and Nominating Committee for 2025-2026:** Ken Jaffe provided an overview of the work of the Nominating Committee and presented the slate of nominees, which is available on the Temple's website: President Glenn Engelmann; Executive Vice President Jonah Perlin; Vice President Sam Lehman; Vice



President Carin Levine; Vice President Anita Stoll; Treasurer David Antonelli; Assistant Treasurer Myron Marlin; Secretary Laura Steel; Assistant Secretary Jean Veta; Trustees Dan Koch, Ariel Levinson Waldman, David Belman, Michelle Cooper-Neustadt, Mindy Garfinkel and Dolores Siegel; and 2026 Nominating Committee Nominees Abby Levine, Laura Meisnere and Robyn Tarnoff.

Upon motion and vote of those present in person and virtually, the motion to approve the nomination of Trustees, Officers and Nominating Committee carried.

- **Review and Approval of Budget for 2025-2026:** Glenn Engelmann, Executive Vice President and Chair of the Finance Committee (and President-Elect), provided an overview of the proposed budget for 2025-2026 – including the Operating Budget and the Capital and Building Budget – both of which are available on the Temple’s website. A summary was provided in a Memorandum contained in the Annual Meeting Materials.

As set forth in the written Memorandum, the proposed Operating Budget is balanced and both revenues and expenses are projected to total \$8,612,711, which represents an increase of 6.9% in the Temple’s operating expenses as compared to last year’s budget before taking into account debt service. Increased building operations and security costs are the principal reasons for the increase in expenses. The Operating Budget includes the Nursery School and the Religious School. Glenn noted that the proposed budget is balanced due to release transfers totaling \$528,951 from the Surplus and the Sustaining Funds. Especially with the Sustaining Fund winding down, it will not be possible to use such transfers to keep the budget in balance indefinitely, making it necessary to bring expenses and revenues into balance.

The key revenue assumptions for 2025-2026 are: a) a 2.7% increase in annual financial commitments from members consistent with inflation (a conservative approach taken to provide a cushion and one that recognizes that commitment levels are particularly uncertain this year given our new commitment structure and changes in both D.C. and federal employment and grants); b) fund releases for general operations that will support activities in FY 26, mostly for ritual and member engagement; c) Capital Fund commitments paid by new members; d) \$350k in contributions without specific designated purposes, such as the Annual Fund, High Holidays Fund, Memorial Fund, and shabbat sponsorships; e) a release of \$184k from the Endowment Fund for operating expenses (arrived at by taking 4% of the December 31st average balance in the Endowment Fund for the last three years, in keeping with the Temple’s Investment Policy; and f) \$298k in revenues from the increased Security Fee approved by the Board that is estimated to cover approximately 57% of the Temple’s costs for safety and

security personnel; and f) transfers of \$280k from the Surplus Fund and \$248k from the Sustaining Fund.

The key expense assumptions are : a) personnel costs, which account for 77% of the budget and which include a 2.7% cost-of-living allowance raise for all permanent staff (with certain exceptions); b) a projected 10% increase in health and other insurance benefits; c) higher anticipated costs for building operations due to the expansion of our physical building, the related increased usage and utility costs, and inflation; d) increased costs for member engagement; e) increased ritual expenses that include the costs of food and supplies for shabbat events, Kehillat Shabbat expenses, supplemental musicians, and substitute clergy; and f) \$419k for FY 26 security costs, a critical area in which costs continue to rise.

The budget includes a projected increase in Religious School tuition revenue to \$736k, with an annual release of funds from the Michael Bernstein Religious School Endowment Fund and general temple revenues since tuition income does not fully cover Religious School expenses. A balanced Nursery School budget is achieved by including \$333k in budgeted revenue from the D.C Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) pay equity fund grant.

The proposed Capital and Building Maintenance Budget for 2025--2026, includes a plan for \$960k in capital investment in buildings and grounds improvement, maintenance projects, and an increase to the Roof Replacement Reserve. This is a substantial increase, but the total includes \$232k for projects that were approved in prior years but not completed. With guidance from a comprehensive Facility Condition Assessment completed in November 2024, we are continuing to plan for future maintenance and replacement projects in order to preserve the building that will include roof and HVAC repairs to the original structure within the next six years at an estimated cost of more than \$3 million.

Additionally, in connection with funding for the Renovation and Expansion (R&E) Project, the annual debt service for the first five years of the 10-year, \$4.5 million loan from Eagle Bank is almost \$338k. The interest rate for the loan is a favorable 6.31% and the first payment is reflected in the budget. There are an additional \$500k in costs associated with the R&E Project, which will be funded by pledges to be fulfilled in the coming years as well as through expected monies owed from federal programs.

Glenn also explained that, given the high degree of uncertainty, the Finance Committee was very deliberate about projected spending in the coming year, and only absolutely necessary expenses will be incurred until such time as there is more clarity regarding the Temple's likely revenues. For this reason, the Committee has decided to

delay refreshing the five-year forecast until later in the year when we should have a clearer picture of Temple revenues for FY26. Overall, there is a recognition that, while we have taken and continue to take steps to address the financial challenges, including the need to cover debt service in the coming years, there are significant expenditures related to the roof and HVAC systems in the older portions of the building which will be required in the next few years. Careful planning and management of the Temple's resources will be necessary to navigate the years ahead.

After an opportunity for questions and comments, the proposed budget for 2025-2026 was approved upon motion and vote of the majority of members present in person and virtually.

Other Business:

- **Member Recognition:** Ken Jaffe extended congratulations to those who have been members for 50 years: Anne Garfinkle, Phyllis Kalb, Robert and Nessa Peters, Lawrence and Margery Ross, David Saperstein and Ellen Weiss. He also thanked all of the volunteers and committee members for their hard work and dedication.
- **Outgoing Officers, Trustees, Committee Chairs and Affiliate Presidents:** Our gratitude and appreciation goes to all of the members who have served the congregation in volunteer roles essential for guiding and fulfilling the mission and vision of Temple Sinai. We appreciate their dedication and commitment to our sacred community: outgoing officers and board members – Naomi Camper, Deborah Lewis, and Dianne Rudo – who will be completing their terms at the end of the Temple's fiscal year next month. The Temple Sinai community extends its deep appreciation to them and to outgoing President, Ken Jaffe, for their volunteer leadership and their active engagement in, and valuable contributions to, our congregation.

We also extend our thanks to outgoing committee chairs: Dora Chen, Multiracial Sinai; Glenn Engelmann, Finance Committee; Marta Goldsmith, Building & Grounds Committee; Sally Greenberg, TSWRJ; Cara Jablon, TSWRJ; Katie Joselow, TSNS Committee; Howard Oppenheim, TSMRJ; Marsha Shaines, Strategic Planning Committee; Dolores Siegel, TSNS Committee; and Rebecca Waldman, Sinaites.

Our gratitude and appreciation also go to all of the members of the Executive Director Search Committee – Don Fishman, Chair, Alisa Ben-Ami, Tim Davis, Deborah Lewis and David Wessel – and to the members of the Early Childhood Director Search Committee – Sara Rosenblum, Chair, Nancy Golding, Katie Joselow, Lauren REGARDIE, Jeffrey Seltzer, Dolores Siegel, Alana Tievsky, and Rosann Wisman.



The Temple Sinai community is profoundly grateful to Executive Director Ellen Agler, who has provided invaluable assistance in myriad ways over the last seventeen years to our synagogue, as she transitions to her upcoming retirement.

Outgoing President Ken Jaffe also discussed the new communal art installation – a three-dimensional, site-specific art installation that will be located in the entry hallway of Temple –that will be a community-based undertaking and will be constructed from thousands of interconnected paper clips, each wrapped with small strips of printed paper and hung in strings, like a beaded curtain. The congregation is invited to participate in the creation of the project using a QR code.

- **New Committee and Affiliate Chairs:** We also welcome and thank members as they have agreed to assume new volunteer leadership positions in the coming year: Carole Brand, TSWRJ; Sarah Bryer, Multiracial Sinai; Tony Ciccone, Archives; Gary Falk, TSMRJ; Ilana Gordon, TSWRJ; Bob Loesche, Building & Grounds; Jonah Perlin, Finance Committee; Seth Tievsky, Adult Education Committee; and Amanda Wagner, Strategic Planning Committee.

Adjourn: Upon motion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Laura Steel, Secretary