

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF
THE OTTAWA JEWISH COMMUNITY SCHOOL
HELD AT 6:00 PM MONDAY, JUNE 12, 2023**

The Annual General meeting ("**Meeting**") of the members of The Ottawa Jewish Community School (the "**School**") was held in person on Monday, June 12, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

The Meeting was called to order by Joanne Gorenstein, the Chair of the School ("**Chair**"), who presided over the Meeting in accordance with the By-laws of the School.

The Chair confirmed that the requisite quorum was present, and asked Miriam Peters to act as Secretary of the Meeting.

The Chair presented the matters to be dealt with at the Meeting as set out in the Notice of Meeting provided to Members in advance of the Meeting, comprising:

1. The approval of the minutes of the previous year's AGM held on June 12, 2022;
2. A review of School's Financial Statements for year ended June 30, 2022;
3. The approval of the appointment of GGFL as Auditor of the School; and
4. The election of the requisite Directors of the School in accordance with the by-laws and as proposed by the School's Governance Committee.
5. To amend By-Law No. 1.

First Item of Business – Approval of Minutes: Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Members approved the Minutes of Meeting from the June 12, 2022 AGM.

Second Item of Business – Presentation of Financial Statements: The Chair asked Joanne Gorenstein, the School's VP and Treasurer, to present and provide to the Members an overview on the Financial Statements of the School for the year ended June 30, 2022, the accompanying notes, and the auditor's report thereon. The Members were advised that the Financial Statements were previously approved by the Board and no Member vote was required.

Third Item of Business – Appointment of Auditor: Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Members approved the re-appointment of GGFL as the School's auditor for the School's financial year commencing July 1, 2022.

Fourth item of Business - Election of Directors:

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Members approved the election of the following Directors for a two years:

Lorne Segal
Joanne Gorenstein
Jessica Greenberg
Randi Sherman

Jonathan Friedman
Yossi Bokhaut
Neil Presner
Miriam Peters
Ron Prehogan
Howard Fremeth
Chuck Merovitz
Kate Bigney Wilner

Fifth Item of Business

The Chair asked Miriam Peters to present certain amendments to By-Law No. 1, which were undertaken to conform with the *Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*, 2010, S.O. 2010, c. 15

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Members approved the amendment of By-Law No. 1.

Other Business

Adam Aptowitzer made a presentation to the AGM, which are attached to the Minutes as Tab A.

There being no further business to be conducted, the Chair called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and the Meeting adjourned.

Thank you.

As I have three minutes to speak I've reduced my thoughts to writing. If my comments take a bit longer I would appreciate some indulgence. I have some difficult things to say, and without any other mechanism to address the board as a whole, I must say these things publicly. And I ask that my statement be included, in full without summary, in the minutes of this meeting.

I want to preface my comments with the statement that I have always taken the position with respect to the school that it was best if I kept my concerns mostly to myself. Nevertheless, I have, in the past, discussed some of these concerns with the administration – both before Dr. Mitzmacher and during his tenure. But I've come to realize that if I am in a position to see something that needs comment, and I refrain, then I'm contributing to the problem. And so my comments today, are to be taken in the vein, that I see significant problems at the school and I am trying to help resolve a problem and not create one.

We currently have three students in the school. They are in grades 8, 6 and 2. They have all been at the school since Kindergarten. The Jewish education we thought our daughter would be getting 9 years ago is not the education she received. The information I give you now is information that our children have reported back to us over the years.

We can confirm the following as examples:

1. Grade 5 and up not knowing the names of the five books of the Torah in either Hebrew or English;
2. Grade 5 and up not being able to name the three sections of the Bible – and there are only three!;
3. Grade 8 children thinking the Golden Calf was Gd;
4. Grade 5 and up not knowing who the four mothers and three fathers are;
5. Children in Grade 2 being taught biblical stories wrong (and this is not an Orthodox / Reform thing).
6. Our children being told by a teacher to keep an open mind about marrying a non-Jew (when they told the teacher they didn't think it was for them).
7. Our children being told by a teacher that the teacher intends to live with their partner and have a child before getting married.
8. Our children being ostracized (albeit by other children) for being notionally Orthodox, and
9. Children walking around giving the Nazi salute and yelling Heil Hiter.

This is the tip of the iceberg. And you will notice that I have left out pedagogical decisions such as the tefilla program and the mitzvah trips. Although I question the effectiveness of both, and in fact speaking for my children, the handling of these programs has incurred a great deal of resentment in my children.

While I recognize that some of these issues are educational and some are behavioural, and that some attitudes are acceptable to some. It is clear that the level of Jewish education – and Judaism generally – has fallen to pathetic levels at the school. To be clear, this information is not based on single children, in some of the cases above, I have actually asked other parents to quiz their kids on some Jewish basics to

get a sense of how widespread the problem truly is. When none of the children asked can answer basic questions, there is a systemic problem. My initial response to this was to pull together a group of 11 kids that were attending twice weekly after school supplementary classes in Judaism. All of whom attended OJCS. Let that sink in, we were paying parents of a Jewish day school that felt we needed to send them elsewhere to supplement the Judaics.

The other day, a guest speaker spoke to the grade 8 class and asked how many of them wanted to continue their Jewish education. The answer is a minority. But the point is that anything less than 100% is a failure of the school to excite the children about their Judaism. How can it be acceptable that kids are happy leaving the school BECAUSE they won't have to learn more about their heritage.

Now to the point.

I ask you, the Board. How many of you know any of this? Or have any visibility into the product being turned out by the school? There is more to running a school than simply the numbers. No matter what you've been told, you are not turning out children who have the Jewish basics. What will happen to such children? What happens to a community when ostensibly the most educated are missing so much? And what does it say of a school that allows this to happen?

You may know of these issues, but as you may not, I had no choice but to draw attention to them.

I understand the board has taken the position that the Head of School answers to the Board and the entire staff answers to him. So despite my respect for Dr. Mitzmacher, I would suggest that taking this position undermines your duty to faithfully manage the affairs of the school, and at any rate a change of course is necessary to improve what I see as very troubling results in the quality of Jewish education. I would ask you to reconsider this position – even if it means Dr. Mitzmacher's resignation – a statement I don't make without some regret. This is a community school, the board is responsible for ensuring it meets community standards. If you do not know what is going on, have ways of measuring the results, and satisfying yourself – **independently of the people** who have an interest in presenting the situation to you positively – how do you know you are producing a quality product?

The bottom line is that I am one of the ways you can know. And I am telling you flatly that you are not producing a quality product. The school is failing in its core mission. The first step out of this situation is open up official avenues of communication into the school. You must speak with teachers directly and get their sense of things. You must speak with the community Rabbis and ask for their sense of the school's Judaic activities, curriculum and instruction to ensure they reflect our community standards. And most obviously, you must speak to the students and get a sense of what is going on in their heads and the classroom. If you are already doing these things, you must do more. Now that you know there is a problem, you cannot now say you did not know.

And if you do understand the gaps in these kids education, and their usually agnostic view towards Judaism, I would like to hear an explanation of why you have allowed the situation to deteriorate to this. Again, when we entered the school nine years ago, our impression of the quality of the education was much higher.

Finally, I mean no disrespect to Dr. Mitzmacher and his work in the school. Nevertheless, this is a community school and I cannot believe that the board has a good idea of what is really going on here. My family and I are leaving this community, and so I speak these difficult words out of concern and not

because I stand to benefit from them. I hope they are taken seriously, and in the manner in which they are intended.