I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND. The Transition Team [Rachel Hertz, David Itzkowitz (chair), Ricka Kohnstamm, Tamar Resnick, Wendy Schwartz, Aaron Silver, Rosanne Zaidenweber] has met regularly since its creation in December 2017. We have gathered information from congregants about their hopes for Beth Jacob and their opinions about future rabbinic leadership after the retirement of Rabbi Allen. Activities have included: (1) individual conversations with past presidents, Rabbis Allen, Kippley-Ogman, and Grimm, staff members, and many others; (2) an open meeting, which attracted around 60 congregants; (3) a survey, which generated over 270 responses; and (4) a series of small-group “congregational conversations” engaging over 100 participants. A few key takeaways:

• The conversations have been far more successful than we could have dreamed. Numerous participants told us that their participation had deepened their connections to the shul.
• The conversations reinforced what we had already heard about the continued commitment to the founding values of the congregation.
• Topics for future conversation include living up to our values, enhancing services, balancing looking at our practices with looking at our relationship with the world, how we provide a Jewish education for our children, and strengthening lay leadership.

II. COMMUNITY NEEDS.

Shabbat Morning Services. There is strong support for the “traditional” nature of the service, but we heard wishes for more musicality and spiritedness, more explanation and learning, and greater accessibility for those uncomfortable with Hebrew. Moving forward will require commitment to preserving the traditional nature of the service, while also slowly introducing thoughtful changes. This is a fruitful area for congregational conversation even before new rabbinic leadership is in place. We recommend the reconstitution of a committee like the past T’filah Team to take leadership in this area.

Welcoming Everyone. Many people expressed how welcome they have felt, but others noted that we need to be better at responding to differing levels of knowledge, to making people with non-Jewish family members or who aren’t Jewish themselves feel fully welcomed, and to be more sensitive to changing understandings of gender identity.

Youth Education. Youth education is at a critical moment. Does the long-time commitment of the shul to Talmud Torah need to be abandoned or reimagined in light of changes to community-wide Jewish education? Addressing this issue will require imagination, sensitivity, creativity, and passion. The role of the next rabbinic leader will be vital in considering this issue, though it will also require vigorous lay participation.

Other Themes. Develop lay leadership; engage the next generation; provide more adult education; develop more ways to engage congregants on a social level; make governance more transparent; increase office staff; ensure ways to maintain community in the face of change; establish ways to have difficult conversations.
III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RABBINIC SEARCH

**Timing.** To post our job opening before the High Holidays, *the search committee should be launched and beginning its work by early June. This means the board has to make some decisions and have clarity on our budget and rabbinic leadership model before then.*

**Interim Rabbi.** The continued presence of Rabbi Grimm during the coming year and the continuation of transition activities as we suggest would accomplish many goals traditionally served by an interim rabbi.

**Things We Value in Rabbinic Leadership.** The survey and conversations reflected our appreciation for our founding rabbi and his tireless efforts, as well as our understanding that no individual rabbi will be able to fill all possible rabbinic roles. Using the capacity of our many highly skilled members may help limit what we ask of new rabbinic leadership; details of how this could be accomplished will require further consideration.

- Congregants hope for a charismatic Rabbi who can inspire, teach, and challenge current members, and who can *attract new members*, including younger people and families.
- There was broad agreement that *strong pastoral skills are absolutely essential.*
- We are looking for skill in developing and *supporting lay leaders.*
- We want rabbinic leadership able to help *build a culture* in which members of the community can *respectfully discuss difficult issues.*

Additional rabbinic skills and qualities we value include: *bimah* presence; intellectual heft; community organizing and bridge-building skills; understand needs of different generations and other constituencies; cares about liturgy; understand financial issues; see himself/herself as part of the community as well as its leader; willing to continue Beth Jacob’s *minhag* of having lay leaders lead the service/read Torah, etc.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONGOING TRANSITION ACTIVITIES. To support the transition, we recommend *maintaining a transition team* (with changes in its membership) for the next year. The team will: (1) build on ideas that have come out of the work; (2) support the strengthening of lay leadership (along with board); (3) provide a way to *continue engagement* among congregants with each other and with the process of transition. Strengthening intra-community relationships is especially important as our rabbinic leadership changes. We also recommend *reconstituting some version of a T’filah Team.*

V. CONCLUSION. Change, as we all know, is difficult. The work we have done, however, has convinced us that Beth Jacob is *well positioned* to move from strength to strength. Our strong base of agreed-upon values and the sense of community that has always existed but which was strengthened by the process that we have been engaged in will serve us well.