

**Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**December 12, 2021**

Because of Covid, we met again by Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 10:05 AM, the following Board members participated;

Steven Leventhal – President  
Alan Victor – Treasurer  
James Wartenberg – Secretary  
Neil Gordon  
Joel Leventhal  
Em Leventhal  
Sarah Silver Luksenberg  
Dr. David Nover  
Robert Victor  
Michael Leventhal – Executive Director

**Unable to participate**

David Moskowitz – Vice President  
Marian Moskowitz  
Larry Brown  
Carol Brown  
Rabbi Kevin Bernstein, DVM

Our December meeting always involves a number of important action items, so we front-loaded the agenda with all of the necessary votes – and saved the later part of the meeting for the discussion of reports and various other issues.

- 1) Review of previous meeting minutes and notes – from December 2020, October 2021 (everyone received a copy electronically before the meeting). James Wartenberg made a motion to accept the minutes of both meetings without changes, Steve Leventhal seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
- 2) Review of the changes made to the gift acceptance policy.
  - 1) We reduced the number of people required for the “Gift Acceptance Committee” (used only in the event we have an unusual gift offer – which we never have had yet)
  - 2) We changed the requirement to establish a named endowment – to a minimum gift of \$36,000
  - 3) We added a few types of gifts we accept – to include gifts made online through websites, through Internet channels, and directly deposited.
  - 4) We were advised by Bank of America to not accept Crypto Currency yet. There are companies that will convert it to cash before the donation is made.
  - 5) We increased the minimum age for Charitable Gift Annuities to 70. (Even though we do not currently offer this option.)

David Nover made a motion to adopt the revised Gift Acceptance Policy, Sarah Silver Luksenberg seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

- 3) Review of remaining board policies
  - a) Conflict of Interest Policy
  - b) Document Retention Policy
  - c) Fair Market Value Policy
  - d) Nondiscrimination Policy
  - e) Whistle Blowers Policy
  - f) By-Laws

Our board policies are among the most comprehensive and robust of any nonprofit – thanks to the excellent work of our attorney who specializes in nonprofit matters. We are proud to be among the elite with our policies. James Wartenberg made a motion to reaffirm each of the board policies as written without any changes. Steve Leventhal seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

- 4) The next vote was to set limits on the grant requests from the Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind, Beit Oved, Israel during 2022. Israel expects to ask for approximately 7,500,000 Shekels, or approximately \$2.4 Million dollars. The Executive Director also explained that the Shekel is growing stronger against the dollar, and therefore more US Dollars may be necessary to meet the request.

The motion was made by Steven Leventhal to authorize expenditures of up to 7.5 million Shekels during 2022 for general operating expenses (following formal documented requests) without further board action. Neil Gordon seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

- 5) We discussed authorizing the payment of a Real Estate Transfer tax to the Israel Land Authority. This is a one-time payment that will allow us to use the house that is on our property for commercial use. We voted two years ago to authorize \$250,000 but that was never used (our Board Chair in Israel has been negotiating with them). While we don't think the Land Authority should be charging such a high tax to a nonprofit, that decision is beyond our control. At our board meeting in 2021, Steve Leventhal made a motion that we authorize up to \$100,000 to pay the tax, with the hope that the actual negotiated payment will be lower, Sarah Silver Luksenberg seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Since the funds were never distributed in 2021, Neil Gordon made a motion to reauthorize the \$100,000 payment if requested in 2022. James Wartenberg seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
- 6) Request from the Eliya School for blind children for \$5,000. We have a very close relationship with Eliya since many of their students will be future clients. We bring dogs once a month so the children become comfortable with these large animals. In the past, we have given \$5,000 to be used toward their Animal Assisted Therapy Program. Because of the new conversion rate between the dollar and shekel, we discussed giving them an increased gift. One of our board members (who wishes to remain anonymous) made an offer to donate \$18,000 in stock. \$10,000 for Eliya, \$5,000 for Ofek (next vote) and the balance in honor of Sarah Silver Luksenberg. Since the transfer of \$10,000 is coming from our bank account, Jim Wartenberg made a motion to send \$10,000 to Eliya School for Blind Children, Alan Victor seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
- 7) "Ofek Liyladenu" – an organization of parents of blind children requested we renew our support. The organization was founded by the mother of one of our graduates and focuses on providing music education to children who are visually impaired. The organization was

founded in 1997 and has an annual budget of approximately \$250,000 per year, most of which is the cost of music teachers and other professionals who work with the students. They operate on a very lean budget. Noach felt that it is important to maintain a relationship with this group as their children are likely to be our clients one day. Jim Wartenberg made a motion that we find out how many Shekels they received from us last year, and make sure we send the same amount in Shekels this year. Because of the exchange rate, the gift will be slightly higher than the \$5,000 they received last year, Alan Victor seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

- 8) Approval of the USA Budget for 2022. The Executive Director submitted a proposed budget that called for \$3,300,300 in total Income from all sources, \$701,612 in program, fundraising and administrative expenses and \$2,537,500 in transfers and direct payments for Israel operations. Joel Leventhal made a motion to approve the proposed 2022 budget. Robert Victor seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
- 9) Discussion about renewing our agreement with the Imageer Company. Imageer acts as Fundraising Council for us in New York. They provide many services to us that would be much more expensive if we were to hire staff and bring these functions "in-house."

The Executive Director reported that despite Covid, Imageer raised more than \$1 Million dollars to date with more expected before the end of the year. James Wartenberg asked the Executive Director to invite Imageer to our next board meeting, so the board can meet them, and extend our appreciation for their hard work. Alan Victor made a motion that we retain Imageer for another year at a cost of \$13,000 per month, James Wartenberg seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

- 10) Retention of Bee Bergvall & Co as our accountant/auditor. This firm has prepared our federal tax returns, State returns, and performed the in-house audit of our records for several years. They are extremely thorough and professional. Their fee for 2022 is \$6,000 for the Audit. They are no longer responsible for State filings, as we have retained a separate firm, so we are registered in every state that requires registration. This fee is in line with what was charged in 2021. Neil Gordon made a motion to retain the services of Bee Bergvall & Co for another year. Alan Victor seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
- 11) Discussion regarding Board Members. David Moskowitz, our Vice President and one of our longest serving members, and his wife Marian, who is Chair of the Chester County Commissioners, both would like to gracefully exit the board after many years of loyal service. David would like to assist with succession planning for the Executive Director (who plans to retire at the end of 2027).

The board extends our heartfelt appreciation to Dave and Marian for their many years of friendship and loyal service to the Israel Guide Dog Center. They have provided invaluable support, advice, and counsel for many years. We also extend our best wishes to Marian and wish her the very best as she leads her county.

As an Officer's position is becoming vacant, James Wartenberg nominated Sarah Silver Luksenberg to become our new Vice President. Sarah accepted the nomination and received unanimous support from the board. Thank you, Sarah, for stepping into this new role.

The requirements to join our board is an agreement to “give or get” \$1,000 per year and commit to the stated mission that our primary purpose is to provide Guide Dogs to people in Israel who are blind or visually impaired.

Em Leventhal, Grandchild of our founder Norman Leventhal, attended the board meeting and expressed an interest in joining the board. Em is employed as a mental health counselor and currently resides in Lambertville, NJ. After a brief discussion, Em was elected to serve on the board effective immediately. The board hopes the younger generation will assist us in understanding and marketing to Millennials.

Close relationships are disclosed on our Federal 990 tax returns, we now have three Leventhal’s on the Board, Steven is the President, Joel & Em are regular members, and Michael Leventhal serves as the paid Executive Director. We also have Alan & Robert Victor (father and son), Alan serves as our Treasurer, and Robert is a regular member – both also serve on the investment committee.

- 12) Discussion about operations in Israel. The Executive Director reported that due to Covid we will likely produce fewer partnerships in 2021 than we did in 2020. The main reason is fewer dogs were accepted into the high-level guide dog training program. It was reported that the lockdowns in Israel had unintended consequences. Since the puppy raisers were confined to their apartments, the dogs were limited in their exposure to the outside world and many experiences that are necessary for puppy development. They did not go between classes, travel on public transportation, go to restaurants, the library, shopping, parties and other social activities.

The goal in exposing the puppies to these stimuli, is to reduce their stress. When they encounter these things as a working dog, we want them to think, “No big deal, I’ve done this before.” Because they had limited experiences, a larger percentage were not accepted into the guide dog program. In addition, wearing face masks was also a factor. The puppies were unable to observe facial expressions, again, adding to their lower understanding about what was expected of them.

Incidentally, we have heard from other guide dog schools from around the world that they are experiencing similar outcomes, so this is not unique to our program. To address the lower numbers, we have decided to take a few more of the dogs that would have become guide dogs and moved them to the breeding program. Again, reducing the numbers in the short-term to produce more dogs in the years to come.

As for training clients, we have resumed on-campus classes, but we are also providing “Domiciliary training” for clients in their homes one-on-one if they are not comfortable attending class yet. Home instruction is extremely labor intensive and a logistics nightmare, but our staff does not want to waste a single dog – our most valuable and precious resource.

The board wants to commend all our staff in Israel for their dedication and loyalty during this unprecedented time. We all hope the end of the pandemic is near and we can return to a normal training schedule. We also hope to increase the total number of dogs we place each year.

- 13) The IDF approached us recently and asked us to increase the number of dogs serving soldiers suffering from PTSD. We signed a contract with the Ministry, and we are obligated to give 20 dogs over the next two years for soldiers suffering from PTSD. Our agreement indicates we will receive 90,000 NIS reimbursement per dog which is a meaningful step for Israeli recognition and support.
- 14) Continued discussion about hiring a part-time fundraiser in another city. This had been the main topic of discussion during our October 2021 meeting. Our goal is to find a professional fundraiser who has recently retired from a Jewish Federation, Israel Bonds, or other well-known Jewish fundraising organization. Someone willing to work from home, and just reach out to their contacts about donating to us. We are planning to offer \$1,000 per month, plus a performance bonus (we are not permitted to pay a straight percentage of gifts received).

We have no idea if there are people looking for this kind of position during a pandemic. It may be difficult, but we decided to post ads on JewishJobs.com and see what comes in. We are not locked into any geographic area, so we are open to the best candidate we can find. Our hope is they will be from a major market, LA, Miami, Chicago, Houston, etc, but we are keeping an open mind. There was unanimous agreement to allow the Executive Director to place the ads and see what kind of response comes in.

**The voting portion of the main meeting was completed at 11:15 AM, those who needed to leave were excused. Those remaining discussed other topics.**

- 15) We discussed the new “Name a Puppy” program. The Executive Director is optimistic that the program will grow, but we are disappointed it is not taking the shape we envisioned. So far, 17 donors have signed up, bringing in \$85,000 in revenue. Many of the donors increased their normal giving to reach the \$5,000 minimum contribution.

The program was designed to give each puppy their own webpage – to make it easy on our staff to share “Pupdates” with the donors. We wanted the webpage so each puppy and each donor would be treated equally. Consistency is an important element. We also wanted Israel to use their database to send out regular and consistent communications.

To date, this has not been done. Our coordinator is doing her best to get information out to donors, and sending very cute pictures, but it simply is not as professional as we would like. Consequently, we have not promoted the program to the level we should. I had hoped to go to Israel to work with the coordinator to get the program where it needs to be, but Israel keeps closing their borders and I have not been able to visit. We hope this is an issue we can resolve soon.

- 16) Treasurers Report: Just prior to the board meeting, the Executive Director went online to see the current value of our cash and investments and reported that we have \$21,675,724. We are hopeful that the market will continue to rise. With an operational budget in Israel of nearly \$4 Million per year, we would need \$80,000,000 at 5% to be self-sustaining.

**Meeting adjourned at 11:35 AM, all action items had been discussed and voted upon.**

As always, we are grateful for the services rendered by our volunteer Board of Directors.