

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Virtual Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday April 16th, 2020 7:30pm

In attendance: Judy Goldberg, Rabbi Breindel, Susan Tohn, Jocylyn Bailin, Jim Billings, Mike Joachim, Marcos Szydlo, John Harper, Aaron Friedman, Debbie Glass, Steve Probst, Marla Lewitus, Justin Lewitus, Laurie Margolies, Neil Frieband, Judy Sletzinger, Jesse Wertheimer, Lizza Sandoe, Michael Brown, Gabriel DeBrito, Scott Newman, Beth Schine, Andy Goldberg, Cynthia Myersburg (later arrival)

Welcome: Judy Goldberg

What a long strange 5 weeks it has been! Thanks for being here.

Hebrew with Janet: text by Janet, presentation by Judy G.

“We are all in this together, alone”. The verb root is BDD. Bidud is isolation, quarantine. Badad as an adjective means alone, but it is reflexive in nature. This leads us to understand that even when we are alone we are intimately connected to one another. In fact, the sad irony is that it is only when we are alone that we realize and understand how linked to everyone and everything we truly are.

Approval of Minutes: Jocylyn Bailin

- **Motion:** To approve minutes from 3/12/20 Board meeting. *Motion passed unanimously.*

Temple Administrator’s Report: Beth Schine

Here’s a general timeline of what’s happened during the past five weeks:

First week:

- On March 13th email went out to the congregation announcing the Board’s unanimous decision to discontinue all public gatherings (services, classes, meetings, activities) at Beth El until further notice.
- Since March 14th services and all other programs/meetings have been held virtually. For the first several weeks Beth was on site to make sure the technology worked and to
- Starting 3/14 created multiple professional Zoom accounts for staff members. Made necessary arrangements for putting all Shabbat Torah study groups onto Zoom, quickly moved to set up on to other Adult ed programming, beginning with both Lorel and the Rabbi teaching via Zoom on Sunday morning 3/15.
- Added second weekly staff meeting to schedule
- Shifted most operations from Beth El to home offices. Made sure that all staff were able to log on to their Beth El computers from home. Carolyn and I the only staff continuing to regularly work in the building.
- Survey sent out to congregation to find members who could offer support/assistance to others, as well as find out who might be in need of same.

Second and Third weeks:

- Added pre-recorded Torah readings to Shabbat services

- 3/27 – floated idea to do virtual 2nd Seder to congregation to assess interest, save the date. second Seder invitation went out 5 days later on April 1st.
- 3/29 – held Beth El's first shiva minyan via Zoom for Lily Kinas' mother

Weeks 4 and 5:

- Pesach preparation: Kitchen cleaned
 - Planned for 1st day Pesach services, “Dayenu” experience for school families on afternoon of first day, and 2nd Seder
 - 1st day service was first simultaneous Zoom and livestreamed program – thanks to Shoni
 - 2nd Seder – 105 devices logged on – probably represented close to 200 people – an amazing feat of creativity, coordination and speed – Rabbi, Lorel and Shoni
 - 4/12 – held 2nd shiva minyan by Zoom following death of Louis Putterman's father
 - Currently working on improving technology of Zooming and livestreaming.
 - Have been refining/streamlining our internal communications to be sure information is able to be communicated to congregation both accurately and promptly – we are still operating in a changing environment as we learn more about what works better.

Other “administrative” news:

- Flood averted on Saturday 4/4. We will be adding a sensor to the kitchen floor to detect whether there is water on the floor.
- Dumpster pickup has been suspended to save money while we are not generating trash; can be resumed with a phone call
- Josimar and Kim are continuing to be paid
- Josimar has been coming in 3-4 times a week to clean as necessary; he did the Pesach cleaning, cleaned out the small storage shed
- So far the office has not received any calls related to dues and the financial impact of the pandemic. This will probably change over the summer and fall when new fiscal year starts and the financial impact is more prescient.

Rabbi's Report: Rabbi Breindel

The clergy are hearing more and more about how much community means at this time. Both Rabbi and Lorel are making time at the start of each class to check in with participants.

Ritual

- Coordinated with Lorel to move all services online and revise them to be more community-friendly. Thank you to Shoni and to Beth for all of their support! Services are currently accessible through Zoom, our live feed and on Facebook. Attendance is up for all services, especially Friday night. In addition to Shabbat, special services included:
 - 1st day Pesach services, led by Beth
 - 2nd night Seder (roughly 190 participants!)
 - 7th night Passover festival/Yizkor service

- Launched Omer Speaker Series to offer another way for congregant voices to be shared. I began the series last Friday – they’ll continue until Shavuot (6 weeks).

Lifecycle/Pastoral

- A great deal of my time has been devoted to pastoral care. We’ve had two congregant families directly affected by COVID-19 and another two indirectly affected. Many people are anxious and scared by the currently situation; it influences every aspect of my work.

Community outreach/events

- Continuing to offer weekly appearances on Chagigah as a guest DJ (and listed weekly in JewishBoston).
- Interviewed by MetroWest Daily News on congregational responses to COVID-19.
- Signed community statement on COVID-19 with Sudbury interfaith council.
- Will participate Monday in a joint Yom Ha-Shoah Zoom event with B’nai Torah (hosting) and Or Atid @ 7:00 PM.
- Will join with a MetroWest rabbis meeting next week.
- Recording (more-or-less) **weekly video address** to community for our homepage.

Programming and education

- Launched new series: Hasidic Tales. I’ve been very pleased with the response!
- Great Jewish Stories has been gaining new members.
- Preparing for Siyyum graduation. Coordinating ceremony with Scott and Lorel.

Administrative

- Ongoing coordination with staff (including Hevreh Mishpachah and Hevreh Kadisha) on supporting our community with ongoing COVID-19 developments.

Personal

- I will be taking some personal time this coming Sun-Thurs. I’ll be available for pastoral emergencies.

Other reports: Ritual, Tikkun Olam included as attachments.

Budget Report: Mike Joachim

Needless to say, under the circumstances accurate budgeting is very difficult to do at this time. We are not yet sure how revenues or expenses will be affected by the pandemic and closures. *If you are in charge of a budget please do your best to make the most accurate projections that you can and get them to Mike ASAP.*

- Dues revenues are down from projections, due mostly to loss of members and dues adjustments.
- Fundraising looks to exceed our budget target.
- We are continuing to pay our staff their usual amounts.
- **Beth** reports: Kim is not working at all and Josimar is working much-reduced hours. The total being paid to them right now is approximately \$1,140/week, of which \$215 goes to Kim and the rest to Josimar. **Board discussion:** is this is the right thing to be doing? Several board members noted that they themselves have had hours and pay cut and/or have had to lay off multiple employees. Neil noted that the PPP program runs through the end of June, so we are covered for now. Others noted that we are trying to balance our fiduciary/moral obligations with our ethical/

moral obligations. It was further noted that Josimar's hours will be further cut come mid-May as they traditionally are (the building is used less during the summer). Board informal vote: We will continue to pay the usual salaries until the end of June when the new budget cycle starts. We will re-evaluate before then.

- 80% of our costs are fixed as they are people and salaries. This leaves us with four options:
 - Reduce expenses
 - Increase dues
 - Fundraise aggressively
 - Take more money from Carob Tree
- Beth El's "Savings account" has only \$55K remaining. We have long known that FY '21 would be the end of our savings.
- FY '22 we will no longer have Lorel's salary; the impact of this on our budget depends upon hiring decisions.
- We have no idea what the impact on the budget will be from C-19. Possible scenarios:
 - People feel more connected to Beth El and want to be in community. They will stay and continue to pay
 - We will lose revenue as members leave or reduce payments for financial reasons and/or some of our older members move away or pass away.
 - The Board has the ability and the authority to change the rules regarding how much we can draw from the Carob Tree fund. There is currently \$800K in there. **Steve Probst:** To start drawing on the principal would be "unfortunate" and unprecedented but is possible.
- Neil Frieband reported on the PPP program:

Beth El has applied for coverage under the PPP provision of the CARES Act. This will be a 1% SBA loan through Middlesex Savings Bank for 2.5x our average monthly payroll, including benefits. It also covers utilities. The loan will be forgiven if we maintain our payroll costs. We have requested \$113K. The rules are complicated and keep changing; given that here's what we know for now: In order to be eligible we are supposed to retain the same number of employees through June. This gets tricky for us because our teachers generally stop working in May. However, they have been putting in many extra hours so we will find a way to pay them that will also meet the requirements. Everyone except Josimar is covered (depends if you are a W-2 employee or a 1099 employee). Currently the banks are overwhelmed; we expect that we will get the loan but don't know when exactly it will come through.

Security and building update: Jim Billings

- It has been suggested that Beth El set up an alarm system.
- The system would have 6 motion detectors: one in the Kolel, one or two in the sanctuary/social hall, and other locations TBD.
- We are asking our camera guys if the alarm system can be linked to the fob system so that it would turn off automatically when someone with a fob enters. The last person in the building at night would need to activate the alarm system with a separate device. Alternately Beth could set up the alarm to activate on a set schedule.
- Quoted cost is \$3,415.21 for complete system and installation, plus another \$200-\$300 to add the extra aforementioned water sensor. The monthly monitoring fee would be \$40/month or \$480/year.
- We are in the process of applying for a grant from CJP to cover the expenses up to \$5,000. Hopefully we will receive it!

Nominating Committee Update: Susan Tohn

- The Nominating Committee has been hard at work checking in with current lay leaders and identifying new ones. All of you should have received a call within the past two months thanking you for your service and asking about future plans.
- At this point, nearly all of the Board positions for 2020-2021 have been filled. The one exception is that of the President. Judy has already served for three years and is ready to step down. The NC has reached out to quite a number of people and all of them have declined. The last time this happened the NC came to the Board to appeal for leadership.
- We understand that more so than even in this changing landscape the role of President may be more than one single person can realistically manage. NC has been investigating co-presidency models. It has worked well for many congregations and is a realistic option for Beth El. NC is here today to ask everyone in the room to consider stepping up to this leadership role, whether as an individual or as part of a leadership team.
- The NomCom members in the room are Susan Tohn, Jocylyn Bailin, and Debbie Glass. Judy Goldberg is also involved. Please reach out to any of us with any questions, to volunteer, and/or to suggest someone else that we might contact. Thank you.

Board check-ins: Judy Goldberg

- Each Board member took turns speaking about how they personally are managing in the current C-19 climate, as well as what they are hearing from the congregation through phone calls.
- Judy will be asking for another round of Board calls starting this coming weekend.

Surprise – or not so surprise- announcement: Judy Goldberg

It will come as a shock to absolutely nobody that the Carob Tree II initiative has been postponed.

Meeting adjourned 9:05pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jocylyn Bailin

Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley

Addendums to minutes

Ritual Report:

Ritual Report

For meeting April 16, 2020

What a month it has been! At the last meeting the board voted to close the building to all congregants and for all gatherings. Thank you, thank you to Rabbi Breindel, Lorel, Beth, and Shoni (and many others) have been integral in starting streaming services for congregants in an adapted way. It has been a journey to figure out how to hold services in a way that is both interactive and has few technical problems. At this point, we are holding zoom sessions with a feed of the session broadcasting in real time on the website. We are working to have it concurrently playing on our YouTube and Facebook pages.

1. Shabbat

Shabbat services are happening on Friday and Saturday at normal times. They are now taking place on zoom, and thus are able to have live reading of Torah portions. In this evolution of distance services, there were a few weeks when readers were being pre-recorded. It seems like just a bit of a step closer to normal to have live reading in the service.

2. Passover

What a long, strange festival it's been. In a time when one day can feel like eight for many people, eight days (or seven) can seem like a forty-day journey of matzoh. In a matter of a few days, Rabbi Breindel and Lorel pulled together a zoom Seder for the second night. The first community Seder held by Beth El (in recent history, if not ever), and certainly the first one online. For the first half of the Seder (before dinner) there were roughly 100 households logged on! The highest I saw was 103. After dinner roughly 45 stayed for the rest of the Seder. We enjoyed teachings, music, poetry, movement together. What a wonderful community creation.

3. B'nai Mitzvah

This week is the second group for the adult b'nai mitzvah class. There are six students in this week's group and some of them are planning on chanting at least three verses of their portion during services this week.

4. High Holidays

We're starting to talk about High Holidays. As we think ahead to the fall we need to plan for both the possibilities that we might not be back in our building yet and that if we are back there will very likely be people who will think it is too risky to be in close proximity with lots of other people.

Given that we will likely have a high number of people streaming services for High Holiday, we should think seriously about getting issues with our sound for streaming from the sanctuary taken care of. This should happen regardless, and our current situation makes it more pressing.

We need to continue to think about positions that need to be filled, including the overall chair and the volunteer coordinator. If you have ideas for who might be perfect for these roles, please let me know.

5. Budget

The Ritual Committee budget has been revised to assume that we will not be in the building for High Holidays. This would likely eliminate revenue from guest tickets. It would also reduce the need for security and eliminate the need for busses to city hall parking.

There is a possibility that needs to be talked about for creating a pay wall for non-members in order to enjoy our High Holiday streaming, or possibly redesigning how prominently we prompt people to donate from the streaming page (and on YouTube and FB), with suggestions and reminders of a ticket price.

Tikkun Olam Report

Our community rises to the current Covid-19 challenge! The world needs a lot of repairing right now. Many Tikkun Olam efforts are already underway in support of Beth El members and the broader community. More opportunities arrive in our inboxes every day. Just a sampling – please spread the word about additional opportunities as you see them, or let me know (jpharper47@gmail.com).

- **Support for housebound Beth El members:** Some Beth El members are all but housebound during the Covid-19 shelter-in-place rules and have needs with even basic tasks such as getting grocery items, pharmaceuticals, and such. Our Beth El community has been wonderful about stepping up to take care of one another! 50 Beth El-ers responded to the call to volunteer.
 - 18 people made phone calls within the first 10 days of stay-at-home. About 4 of those have developed into continuing weekly chats.
 - A half dozen community members are formally shopping for others; we have heard of many more informal arrangements happening.
 - Meals have been formally arranged for two congregants, again, many more are happening informally.
 - Seder meals were delivered to four congregants. Seder plates were delivered to another half dozen.
 - If you know of a Beth El member in need of assistance, please email Jocylyn Bailin at pi_joy@yahoo.com, and she will connect them with a willing volunteer.
- **Maskmakers rule!** Kudos to all those Beth El folk making masks for other members and for local hospitals. Thank you, thank you, thank you. If you need a mask or hand sanitizer (or can make some), please contact Jocylyn.
- **Sudbury Community Food Pantry - Help Needed Opportunity:** The Pantry is struggling to remain open (as an “essential service”), with only a few volunteers. The shelter-in-place requirements have put more stress on those depending on service economy jobs. The Pantry is serving unprecedented numbers of new clients; between the number of clients needing the pantry and the breaks in the food supply chain, the Pantry could really use community support to collect and donate food items to help keep our shelves filled. If you can help, it would be greatly appreciated. If you’re still doing your own grocery shopping (on Route 20, for example), consider buying an extra item or two (see the attached list, and putting donations into the SCFP’s donations bin inside Sudbury Farms, to the left of their exit door. There’s also a smaller bin, harder to find, inside Shaw’s. Contact www.Sudburyfoodpantry.org or Deb Oppenheimer deb_oppenheimer@alumni.pomona.edu. If you’re willing to organize a food drive, please let Deb know.
- **Tzedek Scholarship committee update:** Beth El’s Tzedek Scholars are continuing their studies at Framingham State. Orlando is on track to graduate next month. Nathalie is on track to continue and has 1 final MTEL exam to pass. The committee is setting up a Zoom interview to meet with a new promising recipient. Please consider making a contribution to this effort by writing a check to Congregation Beth El, with “Beth El Tzedek Scholarship Fund” written in the memo line, or donate on-line [here](#).
- **Sanctuary Committee refugee support:** The Ayala family is coping with the Covid-19 crisis. Judy Katz has been a real miracle worker. She has been helping the Ayalas navigate through some

apartment problems, like leaks and some mold. Judy is also picking up documents for the family and pushing the lawyer to get ready to renew their work permit which expired in November. Salvador was sick recently. Fortunately, he tested negative for Covid19. Unfortunately, while his work at grocery stores makes him an essential worker, he cannot work until he has a paper form that states the negative test results.

The family needs help with groceries. Please consider contributing by writing a check to Congregation Beth El, with “Sanctuary Project Fund” written in the memo line, or donate on-line [here](#). If you’re willing to buy a grocery card gift card to give to them directly, please contact Judy Sletzinger directly (jsletzinger@gmail.com).

- **Sanctuary Committee social justice updates:** The Sanctuary Committee continues working public policy issues helping immigrants and criminal justice reform. Working through our existing Sanctuary and Yachad mailing lists, appeals have gone out for Beth El members to sign an ACLU petition to reduce numbers in detention in prisons and jails during the coronavirus crisis (aclu.org/covid19releaseprisons), and to send emails to support immigrant hunger strikers in Rhode Island. The committee is monitoring State House activity on the Safe Communities Act legislation. The committee may reschedule the public meeting with Sen. Eldridge to discuss and help people act on the Safe Communities Act. For more information, see this link on the bill [Safe Communities Act](#) from the Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), and contact Kath Bean (kathleenbean@gmail.com) on how you can help.
- **Additional volunteer opportunities:** The CJP, JCRC, Jewish Family & Children's Service, and others offer many opportunities. If you’ve time and ability to help, please take a look at their websites. <https://www.jfcsboston.org/About/COVID-19-Update>
<https://www.jcrcboston.org/covid-19/>
<https://www.cjp.org/get-involved>
- **COVID-19 Support Services From CJP:** If the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has impacted someone you know financially, the [CJP Warmline](#) (1-800-CJP-9500) may be able to assist. With one phone call or by filling out a simple online form, trained Warmline counselors can begin to help navigate available services across the Jewish community. JewishBoston.com also has additional information about community resources during the COVID-19 crisis. CJP has launched the [CJP Coronavirus Emergency Fund](#) in order to extend greater support to numerous Jewish social service agencies providing critical services during this time. 100% of the money raised will help community members who are facing hardship as a result of this pandemic. Anyone feeling overwhelmed with sadness, anxiety or stress, or who wants to harm themselves or others, can access the mental health, emotional support and suicide prevention program Call2Talk by dialing 2-1-1, calling 508-532-2255 or by texting C2T to 741741.
- **Covid-19 emergency funds:** Nicci Meadow is researching Covid 19 Emergency funds with a broad appeal, likely to be trusted, sustainable, and helping low wage workers, undocumented immigrants, homeless people, as well as the general public. If you’ve any suggestions, please contact Nicci at niccimeadow@yahoo.com.
- **Green Team:** MassEnergize continues work on its community sustainability software platform to support community actions on climate change and looking forward to rolling it out soon for Beth El. See <https://www.massenergize.org/> if you want an advance look-see. It’s really exciting! The MassEnergize have met (via Zoom, of course) with JCAN folks for initial orientation, and plans remain for Beth El to be the first congregation to use the software. MassEnergize also is collaborating

with several regional towns planning to adopt the platform (Framingham, Newton, Concord, Lincoln, and Winchester so far). The Green Team welcomes more volunteers; contact Phil Posner for information (land.law@verizon.net).

Education Director Report 4/16/2020

- Over the course of 1-2 weeks we transformed from physical classrooms to virtual ones.
- We are now in week 4 refining phase where we fine tune what we are doing and how.
- I have been doing intensive tech support with some of our less tech-savvy teachers
- Online BE InSpirEd! is DEFINITELY more intensive administratively than in-person. Very different from a prep and planning perspective. Each family needs a minimum of 3 communications from us about every instance that we need or want them to attend.
- There are only two Sundays left in the school year. Last day: May 17th
- The faculty has been incredibly wonderful, and we are very lucky to have them - They care so much. It brought a tear to my eye. I have sat in on almost every class.
- I have had several emails from parents thanking us for doing so much to keep our kids connected. We have done: Tot Shabbat, pre-shabbat singing, Havdalah, and:
- Teachers all pitched in to create a Passover program that was well done yet lightly attended.
- We have had two unplanned faculty meetings where we formed a community of practice around shared successes and the need to refine areas that are harder to teach online.
- Staff has had two overriding goals: keep kids connected to their community and continue learning.
- Looking ahead (hopefully past Pandemic) we are gearing up, as normal, for RE-REGISTRATION The hope is that as people are sitting at home, they will re-register earlier.
- In order to get registration open, we are in the process of budgeting for the coming year.
- It is likely that due to COVID-19, we will come in under budget this year. I wish that at least part of that news was not true.
- There may be some pending changes to the 6th and 7th grade schedule for next year. More on that next month as things materialize.
- Next month, we will also have enrollment projections and a better idea of our budget needs for the coming year.
- Thank you for your continued support - it is wonderful and a privilege to be part of this community

Respectfully submitted,

Scott A. Newman

Director, Youth and Family Education