

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Virtual Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday May 20, 2021 7:30pm

In attendance:, Barbara Miller, Beth Schine, Cynthia Meyersburg , Debbie Blicher, Debbie Glass, Jerry Kazin, Jim Billings, Jocylyn Bailin, Judy Goldberg, Marla Lewitus, Michelle Fineblum, Mike Joachim, Neil Frieband, Sabina Pestka, Steve Probst, Steve Breit, Scott Newman, Shoni Aronovich

Welcome: Jim Billings
Good to see everyone again!

Hebrew With Janet: Y.A'.D – To assign, designate (time or place)

March meeting minutes: Jocylyn Bailin
Minutes approved unanimously

Education Program Update: Scott Newman, Shoni Aronovich, Marla Lewitus
Full report attached.

Updates:

Shoni: Had a nice in-person (teens and their parents) event for JLOFT a few weeks ago – built desks that were donated to families in need. Everyone looking forward to being face-to-face next year. We are starting to see if we can form a HiBuR cohort for next year to visit Israel. There will not be an Israeli group visiting us.

Great news - CJP provided an additional donation of \$10,000 to support our collaborative programming! Congrats to Shoni et al!

Scott: Last Sunday lower-school students got together in the parking lot for the first time in a year and two months. Used the event to show appreciation for the students, parents, and teachers. Sang together for the first time, in person, in over a year. Event showed that we were successful in holding together the school community through the pandemic.

Talmud Torah/Adult Education Update: Barbara Miller

Adult Ed priority this past year was bringing people together for learning but also for community. We are having a meeting next week to plan for next year. Looking at the possibility of a beer-tasting event outdoors at the end of June. Looking at bringing in prominent scholars – local or otherwise – next year. Will continue to draw on congregational and other local instructors. Looking at history of 20th century American Judaism and Beth El's place in that.

Grand News: The scotch tasting brought in \$6,700!

Temple Administrator's Report: Beth Schine

No changes in membership numbers.

Have been busy working with several committees – Lorel L'Hitra'ot, Post-Lorel transition, COVID, planning group for hybrid/virtual/in-person world.

Had a ransomware virus. Recovered but lost some videos.

Have a new secretary, Svetlana Taksa, who has been with us for three weeks. She has been wonderful. Beth will be on vacation next week, so the office will be mostly unstaffed then.

Discussion: How to welcome people back in person:

CDC guidelines, Commonwealth guidelines.

The latest state guidelines allow for up to 28 people, with masks, plus clergy and staff. This is in effect only until May 29th. The latest CDC guidelines state that only vaccinated people can come back. These guidelines are constantly in flux; guidelines for houses of worship have not been updated as frequently as other guidelines. We need to set some policy:

How can we return to in-person services slowly but surely? We need to ease people back in, keep it simple, keep masks on regardless of guidance. Bat Mitzvah on June 19th – there are elderly relatives who are extremely concerned about the number of people in the room, especially if not masked (but anxious with masks too). Could we change policy after the 19th?

Proposal: Open up to limited numbers (up to 50?)

Everyone wears masks

“Pod” seating

No communal food – BYOF. Outdoor eating only.

Will reevaluate this at our next Board meeting and modify our policy then based on latest guidelines. Beth will contact the Synagogue Council to see what their recommendations are.

The building will officially remain closed to congregants. Need to figure out how and under what circumstances that changes. We will need to take an official vote to allow people back into the building.

Executive Session invoked 7:45pm

Meeting adjourned 8:35pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jocelyn Bailin

Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley



Find Your Way

CONGREGATION BETH EL
OF THE SUDBURY RIVER VALLEY

Tikkun Olam update – May 2021

Beth El members are repairing the world in many ways: bringing comfort and relief to people near and far, making our world more just and sustainable, and helping our congregation grow richer in loving-kindness, justice, and self-reflection. Please read about the ways our fellow congregants are engaged in Tikkun Olam, consider joining in, and email me if I've missed anything. *Thanks to all involved for your important and holy work!*

- **Sanctuary Committee:** The Sanctuary Committee continues to work in many areas:
 - The Committee sent an email to the congregation on May 6 appealing for funds to help with the Ayala family's rent for the rest of this year. We look forward to being successful in raising the \$9000 we need for this purpose.
 - As has been widely reported, the Biden administration has raised the quota for people seeking refugee status from 15,000 up to 62,500 for the rest of this year. Presumably it will go back to 100,000 for following years. This follows a vast letter-writing campaign organized (among others) by HIAS, in which many Beth El members participated. Sometimes our leaders just need a bit of a push to do what is right! Sometimes they need to be convinced that they're not standing alone. That's something we can do, and plan to continue doing.
 - The Sanctuary Committee together with the Anti-Racism Working Group is sponsoring a Bystander Intervention Training to be led by Beth El member Craig Ross on July 11 from 2-4 PM.

For info on the Ayala family, contact Judy Katz (judy16k@gmail.com) or Judy Sletzinger (jsletzinger@gmail.com). For info on legislative action, contact Kath Bean (kathleencbean@gmail.com). For info on Friday afternoon stand-outs or other Sanctuary Committee activities, contact Carl Offner (carl.offner@comcast.net).

- **Anti-Racism Working Group:** The Anti-Racism Working Group has had another active month:
 - At the April Working Group meeting, we offered a learning opportunity on anti-Asian American racism.
 - We have placed Black Lives Matter and #Stop Asian Hate signs in front of the Beth El building.
 - Members of our group have:
 - drafted a mission statement for the Working Group;
 - collaborated with a predominantly Black and Latinx church in Framingham to offer Covid vaccination information sessions;
 - collected furniture to donate to Kimya's House in Boston for formerly incarcerated women;
 - curated a list of antiracism books appropriate for toddlers;
 - helped organize a bystander intervention training program to take place in July;
 - participated in the URJ's inaugural Racial Justice Initiative session;
 - participated in many learning opportunities outside Beth El, including a five-session workshop titled *White People Challenging Racism: Moving From Talk to Action*; and
 - organized and participated in monthly book group meetings. *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin was discussed at the April Book Group meeting.

Contacts: Judy Goldberg and Karen Blumenfeld

- **Criminal Justice Reform:** We have successfully completed the drive for home goods for Kimya's House, the program for homeless women affected by the Criminal Justice system in the Boston area.

The director of the House is delighted to hear about all the items that were pledged and we have just learned that we can bring donations on Sunday, May 23. The house is 7 - 10 minutes from Rt. 93 in Roxbury and we're seeking volunteers to help transport the items. The Criminal Justice Reform Committee hopes to organize a panel discussion on current and future assistance to those caught in mass incarceration. If you're willing to help transport the goods to the house on May 23, or want more info, please contact Elaine Barnartt-Goldstein at 978-443-8084 or ebarnarttgoldstein@gmail.com.

- **Green Team:** Green Team continues to be active on many fronts:
 - Thinking about getting an EV? Wondering about the options? Great! On April 15, over two dozen Beth El folks and friends joined a Green Team webinar on electric vehicles. If you weren't able to attend, Michael Gevelber can help answer questions. Also, check out the Green Energy Consumers Alliance EV page (<https://www.greenenergyconsumers.org/drivegreen>).
 - On April 27th, the Jewish Climate Action Network held its annual conference – Everything is Connected. So many voices, so much inspiration, to take action on carbon reduction, advocacy, soil and agriculture, and environmental justice issues. Click here for more information: www.jewishclimate.org/3rd-jewish-climate-action-conference.html.
 - This month, we've two new wonderful Climate Mensches of the Month! Hats off to Nancy and Ira Silver! Read how they're reducing their carbon impact, and what they hope to do. Many good ideas for the rest of us to consider! <https://bethelsudbury.org/beth-el-green-team/>
 - Check out the Green Team's web page <https://bethelsudbury.org/beth-el-green-team/> to sign up for the Beth El Green Challenge and sign up for our GreenTeam list-serv (email greenteam-subscribe@members.bethelsudbury.org).
 - Have questions on solar, composting, heat pumps? Questions about what else you can do to repair the world by reducing your carbon emissions? Contact John Harper at jpharper47@gmail.com.
- **Tzedek Scholarship Fund:** The Tzedek Scholarship Fund Committee is thrilled to congratulate our three new graduates, Nathalie Camargo Carter, Ann Sashell Thebeau, and Rayanne Silva, all completing their undergraduate work at FSU this month. To date we have funded seven students, all of whom will have graduated. We are also beginning to review applications and plan to select a new scholarship recipient for the fall term.
- **Support for Beth El members:** This pandemic continues to put new and unfamiliar demands and strains on many of us as individuals and families. No matter what your situation is, these are trying and stressful times for everyone. This is a time for our community to step up and take care of one another. There are currently two community support initiatives underway:
 1. **Phone Buddies** This past month, Carol Sheingold has facilitated phone calls for one congregant who expressed a need for more connection with others. In the next week, she will be checking in with current "buddies" who were paired earlier to see how they're doing, if they have continued, or have less of a need to have a phone buddy with vaccinations, etc. increasing and more opportunity to get out and about. Congregants should contact Carol Sheingold at 617-943-3977 or csheingold@gmail.com to find out more and become a phone buddy!
 2. **Soup Group!** This group of congregants continues to make and deliver soup and other meals to other members of the Beth El community. Even though we're into springtime, it's still wonderful to receive homemade vegetable or chicken soup. Frequently the recipient gets a challah as well! Please contact Jocylyn Bailin at pi_joy@yahoo.com to nominate yourself or someone else for a soup or meal delivery!
- **Help for Congregants Who Need Food Assistance:** If there are any congregants who could use some food assistance, they should contact Deborah Oppenheimer directly at deb_oppenheimer@alumni.pomona.edu; all information will kept confidential. If any need assistance getting pantry (or other) groceries delivered to them, they should contact Neighborhood Brigade (with whom Deborah has partnered). If they live in Lincoln or Sudbury they should contact Sudbury

Neighborhood Brigade about home deliveries, at Sudbury MA Neighbor Brigade <sudburyma@neighborbrigade.org>.

- **MetroWest Free Medical Program:** The MWFMP is “seeing” patients remotely through a combination of video calls, phone conversations, and text messaging. We’re limited right now to patients we’ve seen before and hope to extend our services to new patients in the future and eventually start seeing patients in person as the Covid emergency abates. We’ve received some emergency grants from funders that are helping to make the transition to telemedicine. Visit our [website](#) to learn more and get involved. **We have some needs for volunteers and paid staff.** We’re especially looking for physicians in adult general medicine and Psychiatry to add to our volunteer staff. We’re also looking for nurses in adult medicine and Psychiatry for volunteer or paid part-time positions. For more information, please contact our Medical Director, Dr. Peter Dain at pdain@mac.com . We also need someone to fill a communications position including maintaining our web site and sending out newsletters. Volunteer or possibly paid part time. Please contact Gary Hirsch at GBHirsch@comcast.net if interested.
- **Tzedaka Hevra:** The Tzedaka Hevra has had a very busy and productive year, giving away roughly \$28,000. 60% went to 3 organizations and the remaining 40% to 22 other organizations. We heard from speakers representing organizations that we donate to, or that we may donate to. The Hevra meets regularly and is open to any Beth El member. To learn more, contact Ira Silver isilver@framingham.edu
- **Blood Drive:** We tentatively have a blood drive scheduled for Monday, July 26, 2-7pm.
- **Kiddush donation opportunities:** In lieu of hosting Kiddush at the temple, consider joining a Beth El Kiddush group, which plans to donate funds to food pantries, including [Sudbury Food Pantry](#), [Greater Boston Food Bank](#) and [Feeding America](#).
- **Covid-19 volunteer opportunities:** Our community rises to the current Covid-19 challenge! 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. The JCRC, Jewish Family & Children's Service, and others offer many opportunities. If you’re able to help, please take a look at their websites:
<https://www.jfcsboston.org/Volunteer/Volunteering-at-JF-CS>
<https://www.jcrcboston.org/covid-19/>
- **COVID-19 Support Services From CJP:** If the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has affected 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.

Thanks to everyone for your holy work! If I’ve missed anyone’s Tikkun Olam efforts at Beth El, please let me know. We’d like to share the news with the community! If something here interests you, and you don’t see contact information, let me know and I’m happy to connect you.

L’shalom,

Michelle Fineblum, VP, Tikkun Olam

tikkunolam@bethelsudbury.org

[Beth El’s Tikkun Olam web page](#)

Rabbi's Report April-May 2021

Ritual

- **MetroWest Shavuot** brought together 17 Jewish organizations. I led a Torah hike at Drumlin Farm, presented a class, offered words of Torah and read the Ten Commandments with Lorel. Lorel has been at the forefront (Nicci, Shoni and me backing up) – a LOT of work for a beautiful event.
- **Coordinated with gabba'im** for tributes to Lorel last Shabbat as well as led havdallah with my family for her tribute concert.
- **Kristina Dain** was this year's Siyyum graduate – we celebrated her on 5/7.
- **Adelaide Wintringham became our newest bat mitzvah** on 5/8! Next up is Ellie Stevens on 6/19. Please save the date!

Lifecycle/Pastoral

- **Funeral for Carole Felz.**
- **Pastoral support** remains a major factor (none directly connected to COVID).

Community outreach/events

- Presented at a **follow-through event with the Islamic Center** on Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspectives on forgiveness. Reached out to my contact there around the violence in Israel with a prayer for peace.
- Offered a brief meditative session at the **JCAN climate action conference** (alas – due to tech issues on their end, my session was cut very short).
- Presented with other partnering rabbis at **inter-congregational J-LOFT event**
- **Continuing to record for Chagigah** – just did a special slot given the violence in Israel. We can do a special spot to honor Lorel at a time of our choosing.
- Accepted invitation to join **Rabbinic Advisory Board for JALSA (Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action)** after consulting with Jim. Will be sharing resources with our Tikkun Olam team as JALSA makes them available to us.

Programming and education

- Joined with Scott for **end-of-year Be Inspired ceremonies** this past Sunday
- Our **2021-2022 Torah Class** will conclude for the summer next week. Plan to continue (in person?) following the High Holidays.

Administrative

- Long-term planning with **Visioning team, Education staff** (education), **COVID Committee** and **transition year** team (Jim, Jocelyn, Lizza, Rachel Goldner & Beth).

Personal

- Will be taking some time off Memorial Day week – will return to office on Friday 6/4. Booked vacation time for the first two weeks of July – will join in the Tu Bi-Shevat ceremony on 7/17.

TALMUD TORAH REPORT 2020-2021

FOSTERING COMMUNITY

This past year it was important for us to create opportunities for connection within our congregation and extended community. Coming together to learn has always been a priority at Beth El. This year we could not underestimate the importance of coming together. We were happy to offer community gatherings during this unusual year, along with our wonderful clergy and programs by Ritual and Tikkun Olam.

The Adult Ed Committee headed by Ira Silver is a dedicated, roll-up-their-sleeves committee with a wide variety of ideas and interests.

UPCOMING EVENT

Tuesday May 1, Harvard Economist Ben Friedman will join us to talk about the future of work.

If something fun we considered can be added later in April, we'll let you know.

5780-5781

During the summer of 5780 we offered the Adult Ed Variety Hour on some weeknights. Meditation, Writing Workshop, Trains and more. Just in time for staying at home.

As we headed into 5781 we offered a variety of engaging programs, often on Saturday evenings. These programs offered us a "night out" during the pandemic. A break from routine and a chance to see some familiar faces.

Lynne Avadenka

In early November we experienced a last minute postponement of our program with Artist Lynne Avadenka. She was scheduled the evening when Biden was scheduled to speak on short notice the same Saturday evening. She graciously rescheduled in early December.

Her artwork and presentation based on Jewish symbols and letters were engaging. She is from Detroit, works with other artists in Israel and internationally, including work on Climate related issues with other Jewish Artists that took place in Venice. As well, Lynne has a Brandeis affiliation. There is interest in bringing her back in person at some point for a weekend. (Perhaps it could work as a cosponsorship with another org.)

I think at this point we need to bring in scholars or speakers who haven't been at Beth El previously, or who haven't been with us recently.

"Just in case" Suggestion

I would suggest that we have someone on call for Shabbats that coincide with events, just in case a cancelation is necessary. This time it was more about getting the word out and dealing

with a guest via zoom and our host/program moderator. No house staff or additional volunteers were involved.

DovBer/Barry Marchette

During Chanukah I moderated a program with former member DovBer/Barry Marchette, creator of the Beth El Chanukah. We learned fascinating facts about the impetus and process of building the Chanukah. And, oh yeah, for those of us who weren't here then, the first night lighting in 1972 took place in the Sanctuary! Needless to say it was moved outdoors after that.

DovBer The Social Factor

Congregants turned out to hear about this piece of ritual art, but many were also there to reconnect with Barry. He still has very fond memories and is grateful for his 17 years at Beth El in the 1970s-80s. (I recall Larry telling that Barry started his Hommus Factory brand of Hommus in the Beth El kitchen.)

We had some wonderful impromptu community schmoozing in good humor before we started and folks still had a need to schmooze afterward. Before he and his wife became frum and moved to Boston, Aviva was the soloist here 1986-88, One couple reminisced about her singing at their wedding. A good time was had by all.

Poetry

A night of poetry with Bernie Horn. Always a favorite.

Scotch Tasting

The Scotch Tasting in February was a big hit. Steve Balzac persevered for months to make it happen. The original program and presenters he wanted to bring to us could not be available. He did not anticipate such

a high level of interest. We were thinking 20, maybe 30, and a nice little profit. Between the 75 sign ups, auction and purchases, \$7,000 came in.

Raj turned out to be a wonderful engaging presenter on all things Scotch. Arnie Z-K was quite the auctioneer. Sarah B did a great job escalating the bids.

Ruth Breindel Dura Europas Synagogue

Rabbi Josh has touted his mother as a teacher of classics and wonderful presenter. In March she did not disappoint with her two session presentation about this ancient synagogue. She is also a past president of the RI Jewish Historical Society, so it is likely she has more learning to offer us in the future.

In our meetings in April and May we plan to wrap up plans for programs between now and the end of June. We will continue planning and contacting speakers and scholars for the next year.

Moving forward, possibilities for 2021-2022

We will consider a variety of topics and presenters via zoom in-person or both. We are considering programs on interfaith topics, race relations, text, history, culture, Hebrew-beginner and advanced, Israel, etc. Some subjects may dovetail with possible high school programming.

We will continue with titles in the Jewish Book Group

- ● October: Hank Greenberg: The Hero Who Didn't Want to Be
- ● November: Albert Einstein
- ● February: Allan Ginsburg
- ● March: Nachman Bialik

Thank you for supporting us and attending our programs.

Best,

Barbara Miller VP Talmud Torah



PK-5 Youth and Family Education Report

For April 8, 2021 Board Meeting

1. 1) Planning for next year: The Youth and Family Education team is busy provisioning for all possible scenarios for the coming year. Since times are uncertain, we want the Beth El Leadership to feel confident that we are diligently working on flexible plans to handle what comes our way in the coming school year and beyond.
2. 2) Our goals of **meaningful Jewish education, community, and long-term sustainability** remain unchanged. We are keeping our eye on these goals and what accomplishes them, even if it looks different from what we all might have first imagined.
3. 3) We will likely (hopefully temporarily) reduce BE InSpirEd staff for the coming year given COVID fallout, with a clear path toward recovering and surpassing our previous enrollment numbers. To do our part, we will reduce expenses where possible, with caution not to impede our ability to grow. As always, appropriate mindfulness and care will be given to staff affected by this process – this is still in discussion.
4. 4) Next month I will share high-level detail on the projected path ahead for Youth and Family Education in our congregation. Sheila, Marla, Rabbi Josh, Shoni, our teachers, and our families will all be equitable partners in this process. I have also been in conversation with members of the visioning group, and plan to work closely in collaboration where appropriate. We have a great team on the task, (a supportive board in YOU) and we feel optimistic about our ability to build community and foster growth, with adjusting as often as necessary. Remember: it goes back to goals.
5. 5) In administrative news, the first pass of the calendar is almost finished. There will be 28 weeks of BE InSpirEd this year, roughly similar to previous years. Programming details are being solidified daily. Budgeting is in the works as always this time of year.
6. **6) We are determined to rise from this year with strength and knowledge, directed in our mission. We will reprise our stability as we embark upon this historic and holy year of changes for our congregation.**

Chazak, chazak v'nitchazeyk! May we go from strength to strength!

Respectfully Submitted,

Scott Newman, Director of Youth and Family Education

(on behalf of the PK-5 Youth and Family Education Programs)

Teen Education and Engagement Report

May 2021 - Shoni

High School

The students concluded the year by looking at examples from Jewish history in which a challenging situation led the way to positive outcomes, and related it to the year they've had. In addition, they shared their hopes and dreams for when we are back in person.

Kristina Dain graduated in our second well executed virtual siyyum ceremony.

The Jewish Peoplehood photography course had its third and fourth sessions (out of six). Maya Shalev has been learning with us from her new home in Australia.

Middle School

Lag Ba'omer was the first in-person MS event this year, and by all accounts was very successful.

One more session left in the Jewish cultures series, and then an in-person event to end the year.

An agreement was signed with TBS and COA, and we are looking forward to our pilot year as part of JCMW next year.

J-LOFT

J-LOFT's first in-person event (ever!) took place on Sunday, May 3, at Beth El's parking lot together with Barry Glass and Desk-Mates. The event was a blast!

On April 29 we held a meeting with lay leaders from all 7 congregations, presenting the plan for next year as is currently stands.

As a conclusion of the different tracks, J-LOFT students will be facilitating sessions in the MW Shavuot event based on themes they have learned.

General:

Facilitating the tech aspect of this year's MetroWest Shavuot Celebration.

Attending a series of PD sessions about evaluating youth engagement, hosted by CJP's Teen Engagement Network.

CJP rewarded Beth El with an unexpected flexible grant of \$10,000

Ashley and I bought a house (not related to the previous point :)