

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Virtual Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday June 10th, 2021 7:00pm

In attendance: Barbara Miller, Carolyn Schwartz, Cynthia Meyersburg, Debbie Blicher, Debbie Glass, Jake Steinmann, Jesse Wertheimer, Jim Billings, Jocylyn Bailin, Joshua Davidson, Judy Goldberg, Lizza Sandoe, Michelle Fineblum, Mike Joachim, Sabina Pestka, Steve Probst, Beth Schine, Rabbi Breindel, Scott Newman, Shoni Aronovich
Guests for parts of meeting: Cat Kaner, Fern Chertok, Lisa Breit, Sarah Green-Vaswani, Susan Tohn

Welcome: Jim Billings
Good to see everyone again – thanks for continuing to show up!

Hebrew With Janet: To uplift oneself!

May meeting minutes: Jocylyn Bailin
Minutes approved unanimously

Rabbi's Report: Rabbi Breindel

Full report attached.

Additional information: Rabbi Breindel is spearheading a local antisemitism task force. He is hoping to get 11 different MetroWest congregations involved in this task force. They will coordinate responses as well as advocate for increased sensitivity and action upon the part of Town government(s), the school system(s) and the local police force(s). Antisemitic acts are on the rise everywhere, including three separate incidents in Sudbury alone in a two-week period. There is a lot of action going on locally in regard to anti-racism; antisemitism should rise to the same level of awareness and action. Right now RJB is spearheading the creation of the task force and is starting with the clergy. He hopes/plans for the task force to eventually include synagogue presidents and one lay leader from each institution. Once the task force is in motion RJB will (hopefully) hand off leadership to someone(s) else. There is no Board action needed on this; the Rabbi just wanted the Board to be aware.

Call for volunteers: Beth Schine

There is a Bat Mitzvah this weekend, what a joyous event! And there is a Shabbat Rinah Friday night, another joyous event! However, Josimar is out of town. Beth is requesting Board members to volunteer to help with changing the room over after Shabbat Rinah to the Saturday morning setup. Please contact Beth to volunteer.

Vision Alignment Committee Update: Fern Chertok, Jocylyn Bailin, Sarah Green-Vaswani, Lisa Breit

PPT presentation to the new and old Boards of the initial findings of the committee and the current working vision statement. Discussion and feedback on the vision statement. There will be a full presentation of the work of the VAC to the Board at the July 8th Board meeting.

Inclusion Committee update: Susan Tohn

Good News! The fully accessible doors have been installed! Work is underway to pair them with our security system; the hope is to have them fully functional by early August. This is the culmination of a three-year project. The majority of the funding for this came from a grant from the Ruderman Foundation – thank you to them and to Jim and Jerry for helping to make this happen.

The Inclusion Committee (IC) is planning to focus on Mental Health this year. There has already been one program and plans for two more are in the works, with the focus being stress and resilience.

The IC would like the Board to be thinking about having a conversation around gender-neutral bathrooms. There are many non-binary Beth El youth and young adults for whom BE has always been a place where they feel safe, nurtured, and upheld. The lack of a gender-neutral bathroom is undermining this sense of safety and acceptance. For those who are non-binary, entering a “gendered” bathroom is uncomfortable; the solution thus far has been for these members to use the single bathroom in the rabbi’s office. While this does give them privacy, they understand that they need to do something that other people don’t need to do (enter the rabbi’s private space), and this makes them uncomfortable as well. Many, many other places have changed their bathrooms to be gender-neutral; the IC is asking the Board to consider (but not vote at this time) on making this happen at Beth El as well. The retrofitting to the bathrooms is rather minimal – install floor-to-ceiling walls in each bathroom and remove the urinals. There is other work that needs to be done to update our bathrooms as well; this retrofit could easily be part of that work as well. This is NOT a fait accompli and there are no plans to make these changes anytime soon; the IC will be spearheading conversations about this and will allow the congregation to have plenty of time to process and to ask questions. There will be an educational component as well as open meetings for discussion and Q&A. If all goes well we can vote on this at the next Annual Meeting, in 2022. The IC is asking the Board members to be open to engaging in these conversations with all members of our community.

Re-opening Beth El: Jim Billings

The Board had a long discussion on masking vs not masking as we look towards opening up the building more fully to our congregant community. The science shows that being unmasked is largely safe: the incidence of vaccinated people contracting Covid-19 is extremely low, and the positivity rate in Massachusetts, and more specifically in all the areas that BE members come from, is very low (which means that the likelihood of even being in the vicinity of someone with Covid is extremely low), and the vaccination rates in our counties is very high. That being said, there are still those in our community who cannot be vaccinated, be it for medical issues or simply that they are under the age of 12. We want to be mindful of our youngest and all others who cannot be vaccinated **and** we want to open up to being together as a community once again. We also need to start planning for the High Holidays now, and need to give the ritual committee and the clergy some guidance on how to proceed with planning,

After several presentations and much discussion, the following proposal was made:

Motion: To update the synagogue in-person rules as follows:

- Everyone entering the building will be required to wear masks, except when in the sanctuary.
- Once in the sanctuary, persons who are fully vaccinated will be allowed to remove masks if they choose to do so.
- People who are not fully vaccinated will be required to continue to wear masks and to socially distance themselves. This includes anyone who has not been able to get vaccinated for medical reasons and all children between the ages of 2 and 12 years old.
- Fully vaccinated people will be asked to wear a mask in the hallways and bathrooms, where air circulation is not as robust as it is in the sanctuary.
- We will have masks on hand for those who do not have one with them.
- We encourage everyone to carry their own mask. It is possible that someone wanting to speak with you might ask that you wear a mask during your conversation with them, etc.

Motion approved: unanimously

Thank you Michael Joachim! Everyone

A sincere thanks was extended to Michael Joachim for his 10 years of service to the Beth El community as head of the Finance Committee. His dedication, consistency, and humor are deeply appreciated and will be missed.

Executive Session invoked 8:56pm

Meeting adjourned 9:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jocylyn Bailin

Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley

Rabbi's Report May 2021

Ritual

- **Ellie Stevens** will become our newest Bat Mitzvah on 6/19. Please join in the joy!

Lifecycle/Pastoral

- **Gary Bean's funeral** was conducted on 5/21. May his memory be a blessing.
- **Pastoral support** remains a major factor (none directly connected to COVID).

Community outreach/events

- Engaging with local rabbis on responses to anti-Semitism in our region. Proposed formation of an **inter-congregational anti-Semitism task force** with Jim's support. Andy Goldberg volunteered to be Board liaison to the task force.

Programming and education

- Presenting for the **Jubilee Journey** group on engaging with Israel on 6/6

Administrative

- This has been I've been putting the bulk of my time/energy. Planning with:
 - **Visioning team**
 - **Education staff**
 - **Transition team** (added Jen Stevens: coordinator/point person)
 - **Technology team** (hybrid services)
 - In addition to regular weekly meetings with all **professional staff**

Personal

- Will be taking **vacation time the first two weeks of July (July 4-18)**. Will be present for Tisha B-Av on 7/17.



Tikkun Olam update – June 2021

This report is dedicated to the memory of Gary Bean, who taught me and many of us about weaving thought with action, kindness and humor. Gary provided a model for Tikkun Olam – bringing Torah and learning to the real world every day, with care and love. May his memory be a blessing.

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:**

- As you know, Gary Bean died. He was a real leader of our committee, and we miss him greatly in that role, as well as personally, of course. Among ourselves, we have been tearing up the electronic bandwidth dealing with this. We will be (as individuals) making a contribution to HIAS in Gary's memory – as suggested in his obituary in the Globe -- and we certainly urge our fellow congregants to do the same.
- 30 members of our congregation signed the HIAS-initiated petition to members of Congress in support of refugees and asylum seekers. This is not really an overwhelming response, but on the other hand is nothing at which to sneeze. And clearly many other people around the country did this as well, and many members of Congress also spoke publicly in favor of this. In the aftermath, President Biden reversed himself and increased the cap on refugee admissions from the Trump low of 15,000 to 62,500 for the rest of this year -- pretty much what it would have been before the Trump presidency.
- We know that people have been contributing to the Sanctuary Fund, but we don't know exactly what the situation is there right now. Judy Sletzinger is finding that out. As soon as we get that information, we will see what if anything has to be done about that.
- 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 (kathleenbean@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:** This month, members of the Antiracism Working Group:
 - Partnered with JALSA to present a Housing Justice workshop as part of the MetroWest Shavuot celebration.
 - Participated in the URJ's Racial Justice Initiative sessions.
 - Heard a presentation by Julia L, a young woman who grew up at Beth El and is now a psychologist at a Pediatric Sickle Cell Disease Clinic. Learned of Julia's campaign to raise money to purchase culturally appropriate books for clinic patients who are predominantly Black and Latinx. Individual group members donated money to support this program.
 - Discussed *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander at the May Book Group meeting.
 - Are exploring the possibility of organizing an environmental justice program.

Contacts: Judy Goldberg and Karen Blumenfeld

Green Team Update: Green Team continues to be active on many fronts:

This month, we've two new wonderful Climate Menschen of the Month! Ann & Mitch Kramer are climate champions! Their electric bill has been \$0 for nine of the twelve months, thanks to a solar array they installed on their roof. Their car, lawn mower, and other garden equipment run on electricity. And their roses thank them for the composted coffee grounds. Ann & Mitch have all of you to thank, as Bboard responses and the Green Team webpages have given them much useful information. Read how they're reducing their carbon impact. <https://bethelsudbury.org/beth-el-green-team/>

Ann & Mitch inspire us all to think about what climate actions we can do. Take the Beth El Green Challenge: <https://community.massenergize.org/JCAN/>. Lots of ideas are there – check out actions you can take this summer. And, sign up for the GreenTeam list-serv (email greenteam-subscribe@members.bethelsudbury.org). And join the Green Team monthly

Zoom call on Tuesday, June 8th at 7:30. Contact John Harper at jpharper47@gmail.com to get the Zoom info.

Are you dreaming of fresh tomatoes from your garden this summer? How about making pesto using your own basil? Maybe you'd like flowers in the kitchen fresh cut from your own yard, not flown in from another country. Think about your raised bed garden! Black Earth Compost (Beth El's composting partner) sells kits. If you use the coupon code SPRINGFLING,

you will receive \$20 off their raised bed kit. And, think about composting, either in your back yard or via their collection service. <https://blackearthcompost.com/>

Have questions on solar, composting, heat pumps? Questions about what you can do to repair the world by reducing your carbon emissions? Contact John Harper at jpharper47@gmail.com.

Criminal Justice Reform: Beth El members have come forward with the requested home goods for Kimya's House, the program for homeless women affected by the Criminal Justice system in the Boston area. The director was very appreciative. We were hoping to deliver the goods in late May, but the house wasn't ready to receive them. They will let us know when renovations are complete and they're ready for the delivery. The Criminal Justice Reform Committee hopes to organize a panel discussion on current and future assistance to those caught in mass incarceration. For more info, please contact Elaine Barnartt-Goldstein at 978-443-8084 or ebarnarttgoldstein@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: There are currently two community support initiatives underway to support our fellow members:

- **Phone Buddies** Carol Sheingold is continuing to facilitate phone calls for congregants who express a need for more connection with others. Congregants should contact Carol Sheingold at 617-943- 3977 or csheingold@gmail.com to find out more and become a phone buddy!
- **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 Jocelyn 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 be 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 busy and productive year, giving away about \$28,000. 60% went to 3 organizations and the remaining 40% to 22 other organizations. The Hevra meets regularly and is open to any Beth El member. We hear from speakers representing organizations that we donate to, or that we may donate to. To learn more, contact Ira Silver isilver@framingham.edu
- **Blood Drive:** We have a blood drive scheduled for Monday, July 26, 2-7 pm.
- **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 michellefineblum@gmail.com Beth El's [Tikkun Olam web page](#)