

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Virtual Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday August 12th, 2021 7:00pm

In attendance: Andy Goldberg, Ann Barysh, Barbara Miller, Carolyn Schwartz, Debbie Glass, Jerry Kazin, Jim Billings, Jocylyn Bailin, Josh Davidson, Judy Goldberg, Marla Lewitus, Michelle Fineblum, Neil Frieband, Sabina Pestka, Steve Breit, Steve Probst, Beth Schine, Scott Newman, Shoni Aronovich, Rabbi Joshua Breindel
Guests: Cat Kaner

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

Hebrew With Janet: Picky, picky, picky- to choose, to select

July meeting minutes: Jocylyn Bailin
Minutes approved unanimously

Temple Administrator's Report: Beth Schine

Current Membership 236

Since July 1 we have gained 4 new member units – 2 singles and 2 families with children. We have had 6 resignations.

So far over half of the congregation has returned their financial commitments.

Beth has been busy with High Holiday preparations, tech coordination, new members/resignations, getting the building ready, working with the Covid Task Force and transition planning.

Svetlana has been in the office now for 3 months and all is going well.

Big thank you to Neil, Jerry and Marla for doing an amazing job of sorting through and clearing out the accumulation from the attic.

Rabbi's Report: Rabbi Breindel

Full report attached.

Additional items: Pam McArthur did a wonderful job of coordinating our Tisha B'Av community wide celebration. It was livestreamed, not zoomed, and nobody complained about that, so we may well switch to livestreaming larger events.

Our first Tot Shabbat of the new year was last Friday. It was wonderful to see all the families and the children!

Our High Holiday planning will be a modified version of what we did last year.

We plan to be out in the garden at the end of (RH) musaf services with challah and honey, apples, as well as poetry, shofar, and singing. Need volunteers from the Board to facilitate challah, apples, and honey: Judy Goldberg, Ann Barysh, Barbara Miller,

Jocelyn Bailin and Josh Davidson volunteered. **Action item:** RJB will communicate with volunteers next week.

RJB will be facilitating a conversion before the high holidays!

We are actively looking for ways to *increase attendance at Kabbalat Shabbat and Shabbat morning, especially among these younger population. We are looking for ideas on how to craft a program to bring school families into the ritual life of the community.*

Education Report: Scott Newman and Shoni Aronivich

Recruiting for new members is going well. For each new prospective member, Scott is spending 3-4 hours in conversation, communication and coordination. Scott has spoken with 7 prospective members, has onboarded two, and a third is close to signing. Slow registration is expected at this time of year.

All of the teachers are continuing, there will be combined grades classrooms again this year.

High Holidays – parents are concerned because their children cannot yet be vaccinated. The plan is to have a tent in the parking lot for family HH services, led by Scott. RJB will drop in when available. After the family service, the adults can go into the sanctuary, and the kids can remain in the parking lot with Scott and Shoni. There will be snacks and drinks, porta potties, hand sanitizer, and orderly plans for drop off and pickup. Security provisions are underway as well. Masks will be required and provided as necessary. After the HiHos are over the plan is to continue to use the tent as an outdoor classroom, for as long as weather permits.

Our values are: Community, Education, Inclusion, and Togetherness.

Congregant guests at Board meetings: Jim Billings

Board meetings are open to the community, unless we are in executive session.

However, we must impress upon any guest the importance of discerning between what we have discussed and what we have decided upon. Only the latter is official, the former can be wide ranging. We don't want any Board member to hesitate to speak up because there is a non-Board observer. **Action item:** what do we want to say and how?

Covid Update: Jim Billings and Judy Goldberg

In accordance with the latest medical news, effective immediately we will require masking at all times and in all spaces inside the building. No food may be served or consumed inside the building (with the exception of staff eating in their own offices). Serving and/or consuming food outside is permissible. Guidelines for community outdoor gatherings will be discussed at the next Covid Committee meeting.

Motion: To approve of these new guidelines

Motion approved, 11 in favor, 4 abstentions

VAC/Strategic planning update: Jocelyn Bailin

The VAC has officially wrapped up its work with the presentation and delivery of its report to the Board at the July meeting. The presentation has been emailed to every Board and staff member. They ask that you keep the vision statement front and center as you do the sacred work of Beth El. The next step of the process is the creation of a strategic plan. This will address the nuts and bolts of how we apply the vision statement to everything we do as a community. They will work closely with the Board throughout the process. The Strategic Planning Group (SPG) will be led by Sarah Green-Vaswani and Matt Shedd.

Lorel L'hitra'ot Gala: Judy Goldberg

Ken Fishman and Lisa Wendell have graciously agreed to coordinate the event, which is taking place both in person and via livestream. Wonderful plans are underway. The program will be indoors, all meals and food will be outdoors.

Ritual update: Carolyn Schwartz

We are recruiting volunteers to staff the front door during Friday night and Saturday morning services. Volunteers would let folks in who forgot their fobs. You can do this in pairs, and hang out and schmooze together, all while providing much-needed and much-appreciated greetings and assistance to those wishing to participate in Shabbat observance together. A sign-up link has been sent out; please volunteer.

There is discussion about including member's photos in the new Members section of the Beth El website. The members section could also allow people to access and update their own information. Additionally, folks could add searchable interest hashtags – for example, scotch lover, kayaker, bibliophile, etc. If we decide to go ahead with this we would need to run webinars teaching people how to use this functionality. This functionality won't be available until after January 1st, there is more time to discuss this.

Membership Update: Ann Barysh

The VAC presentation echoed the thoughts of the Membership Committee.

We MUST do a better job of streamlining and coordinating communications and information sharing at Beth El (ex: it took Ann 7 phone calls to find out information related to our High Holiday plans). We also desperately need to update the ways we communicate with the outside world. (ex: our contact list for traditional print media is outdated, and we need tech-savvy people to help us post to social media). This requires knowing not only who to contact and what to post, but what our timing should be and where to focus our efforts for maximum impact. We do so much at Beth El and we are not advertising it. Our young families want to see us share more (and do more) of our actions on social justice and family activities. *Membership is requesting that we have a Board Director in charge of publicity, and/or that we hire a part-time professional to manage this.* The committee will come up with a proposal and report back to the Board next month.

Clergy Search: Jim Billings

The clergy search committee has been formed and work is underway. Co-chairs are Howard Boles and Bonnie Jenson. Additional committee members are Jessica Baker, Elena McNally, Janet Buchwald, Judy Goldberg, Jane Brauer and Joel Perlmutter.

Beth El Appearance: Jerry Kazin

Jerry presented a slideshow of all the work that has been done and is continuing to be done to update Beth El's appearance and functionality, both indoors and out. Jerry will send out a link to the slideshow to anyone who requests it. Shout out to Carolyn and Dave for doing a tremendous amount of hands-on work in a short time frame. The current set of actions were focused on improvements that can be made in time for the High Holidays. After the HH plans will focus on improvements to the classrooms to be made in time for in-person/in-building learning. After that the group intends to focus on longer-term and larger scale projects.

Question: Is this short-term beautification or a long-term aggregate master plan?
Group is encouraged to create a master plan, aligning with the strategic plan.

Bank account signature approval: Neil Frieband

Motion: That Neil Frieband, Steve Probst and Jim Billings be authorized signers on our Middlesex Savings Bank accounts #800110522, #50099764 and #163317821. In addition to the individuals named above, Beth Schine is authorized to be a signer on our Middlesex Savings Bank account #163317821

Motion approved: unanimously

Lorel during the transition year: Rabbi Breindel and Jim Billings

There are a few things that Lorel does that are unique and bring special uplift to our community. Shabbat Rinah is especially beloved and is the single largest monthly draw that unites our community. Lorel has volunteered to continue to lead Shabbat Rinah during the transition year. During this time, she would teach others in the group how to lead it and guide them to be able to create a Rinah experience. Right now, none of them feel that they have the expertise to be able to do so. She has also offered to continue leading her Wednesday morning Torah/Middot study group. She has asked for some remittance for continuing this work.

Pros: our community needs the beauty, spirituality, uplift and community-building of Rinah. And the small TS group needs that continued space and guidance.

Cons: There is no clean break from Lorel.

Discussion:

- This is an incredibly generous offer. Lorel is giving us a gift that will help sustain our community through a difficult transition. Not only a transition as in a year without a cantor, but also as we continue to struggle with Covid restrictions and isolation.

- This offer supports RJB by having Rinah and weekday Torah study continue, things he simply cannot take on during this transition year.
- Concern that this does not allow the community to break from Lorel. Rinah is the way that the vast majority of our community experiences Lorel (outside of HH). If she continues to lead Rinah, for many in the congregation it will be as though she hasn't left at all.
- The L'hitra'ot Committee has worked incredibly hard and put in hundreds of hours over the past year to guide our community in the process of saying goodbye (or see you later) to Lorel. Having Lorel continue feels disrespectful/dishonoring of all their efforts.
- We as a community need to learn to function without Lorel.
- Rabbi Breindel needs to take ownership of the community and the ritual experience. Lorel's continued presence will impede him in moving forward
- New idea floated: what if Lorel comes back for only 2-3 Rinah's, and not until January?

An informal straw poll reflected an evenly divided Board. Discussion was tabled due to the late hour. It will be addressed in the Executive Committee and at the next full Board meeting.

Meeting Adjourned 9:18pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jocelyn Bailin

Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley

Attached Reports:
Rabbi Report
Tikkun Olam

Rabbi's Report August 8, 2021

Ritual

- Crafted and led Tisha B-Av services with Pam
 - Livestreamed, not Zoom. Positive feedback on the tech (though too quiet)
- Baby naming for Jennifer and Gillian's daughter, Sadie
- Lorel and I are hard at work **planning the High Holidays**

Lifecycle/Pastoral

- **Pastoral support** remains a major factor:
 - Anxiety related to politics, anti-Semitism, COVID and job insecurity.

Community outreach/events

- Keeping lines of communication open with local clergy groups and school administrations, especially around issues of racism and anti-Semitism

Programming and education

- Working closely with Scott and Shoni on planning the next academic year
 - I'll be offering three more sessions to close out this year's Torah Class
 - I'll be teaching for J-LOFT (joint High School) second semester.
 - Shoni and I will jointly teach for our HS program and I'll lead Siyyum.

Administrative

- This remains where I've invested most of my times, meeting/coordinating with:
 - Transitioning from **Visioning team** to **Strategic Plan committee**
 - **Education staff**
 - **Transition team**
 - **Technology team** (hybrid services – Shabbat and High Holidays)
 - **Ritual committee**
 - **Search Committee**
 - **Membership committee** (and working with new/prospective members)
 - In addition to regular weekly meetings with all **professional staff** individually and collectively.

Professional Development

- Working hard on Clergy Leadership Incubator (CLI) programs.
 - Identifying "gaps" in congregational life (focusing on ritual, given Lorel's retirement and the transition year)

Tikkun Olam update – August 2021

Please read about the ways our fellow congregants are engaged in Tikkun Olam, consider joining, and email tikkunolambethel@gmail.com if I've missed anything. *Thanks to all for your important and holy work!*

- **Criminal Justice Reform:**

The committee has been collecting household goods, office supplies, and art, including an original from a Beth El member and copies of paintings from African, Caribbean, and Jewish sources. The committee (with the assistance of members of the Anti-Racism Working Group) delivered three carfuls of items donated by Beth El members (*Thank You, donors!*) to Kimya's House, now called Women's Empowerment. The house, for post-incarcerated women, is run by New Beginnings Reentry Services in Boston. The director and founder, Stacey Borden, gave us a tour, and reviewed its history, philosophy and inspiring plans for the house and program. Click [here](#) to see an article in MetroWest Daily News about the delivery.

Stacey Borden also suggested future work on the cause of treating people like humans, even if they made a mistake. We will be working against Massachusetts' proposed construction of a large prison for women. Elaine, CRJ chair, will be sending the congregation information on the harm that would do and how we can fight it.

Borden is a Trustee for several local and national organizations working on reducing mass incarceration, especially that of women. We will update you when we find a pertinent bill to support. For more info, please contact Elaine Barnartt-Goldstein at 978-443-8084 or ebarnarttgoldstein@gmail.com.

- **Blood Drive:** Our commitment to host a blood drive on July 26 with the American Red Cross truly made a difference! Our team registered 34 total donors, collected 33 pints of blood and recruited 6 first-time donors. Our efforts have helped boost the community blood supply and ensure hospital patients have the lifesaving blood they need. Thanks to everyone involved and a big thanks to Jordan Oshlag for organizing the blood drive!

- **Green Team:** Green Team continues to be active on many fronts:

- The Green Team is honored to name Liz and Barry David as this month's Climate Menschen of the Month. Not just for what they've done this month – it's how they've lived their lives. In their words, *"Having been born during depression times, we were brought up not to waste anything, so striving to be green was simply a way of life...it's a natural and meaningful way to live."* They've installed insulation and a green thermostat in their home, they drive a PZEV (look it up!), they follow the 3 Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) in their food and other consumption. *"Simply a mind set to treat all resources as sacred and to be responsibly used, whether food, energy, or manufactured product, in line with Judaic teachings. A shirt without a button does not require a new shirt, only a button...It is being green from the core out!"* Read more at the Green Team webpage under Repair the World: <https://bethelsudbury.org/beth-el-green-team/>
- What can you do? You can do a lot! Take a look at Beth El's Green Challenge: <https://community.massenergize.org/JCAN/>. And, for the latest, sign up for the Green Team list-serv by emailing greenteam-subscribe@members.bethelsudbury.org.
- Just thinking: *"One side effect of the pandemic is the uptick in waste going to landfills. As we order supplies online, order in takeout, and stock up on toilet paper, pasta, and frozen pizza dough, we're bringing more and more packaged products into our homes than ever before."* Ever hear of "Extended Producer Responsibility" or "EPR"? Read the article: <https://blog.arcadia.com/get-rid-of-plastic-EPR/> (thank Jocelyn Bailin for the link)
- Are you composting? You can, you know. Easy to do it yourself or by subscribing to Black Earth Compost's composting service. <https://blackearthcompost.com/> Beth El will compost its kitchen waste when the kitchen is back up and running. Contact Linda Klein with your questions at lindaklein840@gmail.com.

- Have questions on solar, composting, heat pumps, advocacy, recent laws? Contact John Harper at jpharper47@gmail.com to connect with a Green Team person following that action.
- **Sanctuary Committee:**
 - We continue to work with the Ayalas in the process of helping them get better jobs to become self-sufficient. They are very motivated! We have met with them several times. This is an ongoing task, unfortunately. We continue to ask our fellow congregants to be as generous as possible given the difficult financial situation. Our thanks to everyone who has given so generously! The Ayalas, and the committee, are truly grateful.
 - We will be pursuing working with HIAS on more general refugee issues starting in the coming month.
 - The Sanctuary Committee together with the Anti-Racism Working Group sponsored a Bystander Intervention Training led by Beth El member Craig Ross on July 11.

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 standouts or other Sanctuary Committee activities, contact Carl Offner (carl.offner@comcast.net).
- **Anti-Racism Working Group:** This month:
 - In partnership with the Beth El Sanctuary Committee, we organized a bystander intervention training workshop at Beth El. The workshop was led by Craig Ross, PhD, MBA, a Beth El member and director of the Boston University School of Public Health Bystander Intervention Training Program. The workshop gave participants skills for safely intervening when they witness public harassment.
 - Elaine Barnartt-Goldstein, a member of the Antiracism Working Group who also leads Beth El's criminal justice reform initiative, organized the collection and delivery of household goods, office supplies, and home decorations to Kimya's House, now called Women Empowerment, in Dorchester. Founded by a formerly incarcerated woman, the program will help women leaving prison or other parts of the criminal punishment system to regain control over their lives by providing housing, social supports, skills training and other supportive services.
 - Members of the Antiracism Working Group are engaging in State-level advocacy on two pieces of legislation: Bill S230/H230 to support a five-year moratorium on prison construction; and Bill S365/H584, to support anti-racism, equity and justice in education.
 - Lisa Goodman is organizing an antiracism learning session for Elul titled "Being White and Being Jewish." Aimed at Beth El members who have not yet become deeply engaged in antiracism work, the session will help participants examine the privileges of whiteness, while looking squarely at the intertwined problems of racism and anti-Semitism.
 - The Antiracism Book Group organizers, Lisa Breit and Ann Barysh, are exploring ways to expand the scope of the group in the coming year. The book group, having almost completed its first year, has proved to be an incubator and anchor for people who want to learn more about anti-racism work. Lisa and Ann hope to broaden next year's work to include movies, documentaries and other forms of art and information to deepen our learning. The Book Group will be discussing *So You Want To Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo in September and *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison in October. New participants are warmly welcome.
 - The Antiracism Programming team - Lisa Breit and Ann Barysh - is exploring the following programming for the coming year: environmental justice, antiracism legislation/policies at the state level, criminal justice reform, film and culture, and Jewish multicultural adoption. Antiracism programs will be open to the MetroWest Jewish community.

- Individuals in the group are pursuing their own antiracism activities including volunteering at mobile Covid clinics in underserved communities in Boston; volunteering at the MetroWest Free Medical Clinic; exploring ways to support Black-owned businesses in Boston; exploring a project to help homeowners in Roxbury, Mattapan and Dorchester make improvements on their homes to enhance their home equity; and, as a member of multiracial board of a local theater, participating in deep exploration of what it means to become an antiracist theater.

Contacts: Judy Goldberg and Karen Blumenfeld

Inclusion Committee: The Inclusion Committee is engaged in several areas:

- We will begin a congregational discussion about gender neutral bathrooms with information sessions and focus groups to share information and hear feedback from congregants.
- We are excited to bring in Bamidbar, an organization that focuses on strengthening peoples' mental health coping skills, among youth and adults. We will bring them to Beth El to do two sessions in the fall:
 1. September 1st from 7:00-8:15pm. "The physiology of Stress" - an interactional workshop where participants will map their stress and how it evidences itself in their bodies and then coping skills. *This session will be on-line only and will be limited to 15 people.*
 2. Oct. 18th from 7-8:30: an intergenerational program with high schoolers and congregants. The title is "Burnout and Boundaries." *This session will be offered hybrid, in person and online.*
- Beth El continues to Zoom services and classes to maximize accessibility and will continue to discuss the benefits for everyone in doing this.

For more information, contact Susan Tohn at susanleetohn@gmail.com.

- **Tzedek Scholarship Fund:** The Tzedek Scholarship Fund Committee is reviewing applications and plan to select a new scholarship recipient for the fall term. To date we have funded seven students, all of whom have graduated.
- **Support and Connection for Beth El members:** Phone buddies and light meals:
With summer in full swing and a return to more normal patterns of interaction, it might seem that all is well. While things certainly are better for many of us, not everyone has the blessings of liberty and health. Some of our congregants cannot be vaccinated, and others face ongoing health or living situations that keep them isolated. If you or another congregant you know could benefit from a friendly call or a light meal, please contact Carol Sheingold at csheingold@gmail.com or Jocelyn Bailin at pi_joy@yahoo.com.

MetroWest Free Medical Program: Our Program has passed some significant milestones as we return from our long Covid hiatus and *begin seeing small numbers of patients in person*. We saw our first Women's Health patients on July 17th and will see our first Adult Medicine patients on August 10th. The visits are taking place at 110 Edgell Road in Framingham on the campus of First Parish Church, our other partner congregation. 110 Edgell is separate from the main church building which makes it more feasible to maintain Covid precautions. We're taking the usual Covid precautions you would encounter in any doctors' office (pre-screening, patients waiting in their cars, etc.). We are continuing to meet the needs of many other patients virtually. Another milestone is that the Program just signed an agreement with Athena Health to acquire their Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system provided at no cost to free clinics. This system will support appointment scheduling and follow up and telemedicine as well as medical record keeping.

With all that's happening, ***we need more volunteers and 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 info, please contact our Clinical Coordinator, Sandra Dickie (sandra@metrowestfreemedicalprogram.org). We also need someone for a

communications position including maintaining web site and sending out newsletters. This could be a volunteer or possibly paid part time. Anyone with experience in implementing an EMR system like AthenaNet would also be very helpful. Please contact Gary Hirsch at GBHirsch@comcast.net if interested.

- **Help for Congregants Who Need Food Assistance:** Any congregants who could use some food assistance 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, contact Neighborhood Brigade (with whom Deborah has partnered). Any congregants who live in Lincoln or Sudbury should contact Sudbury Neighborhood Brigade about home deliveries, at Sudbury MA Neighbor Brigade <sudburyma@neighborbrigade.org>.
- **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
- **COVID-19 Support Services From CJP:** If COVID-19 has affected someone you know financially, the [CJP WarmLine](https://www.cjp.org/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. 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.
- **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! The JCRC, Jewish Family & Children's Service, and others offer many volunteer 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/>

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 tikkunolambethel@gmail.com

