

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Virtual Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday September 10th, 2020 7:00pm

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

7:00pm-8:00pm Security presentation with CJP

Regular Board meeting initiated at 8:05pm

Welcome: Jim Billings

Thanks to all who showed up for the CJP security meeting.

Rabbi's Report: attached

Mission and Vision working group: Jocylyn Bailin

Beth El is looking to create a Mission and Vision statement. This will be a covenanting document that helps us to understand ourselves and our place in the Jewish world. We hope that it will be something that can bring us together with a sense of unity and purpose, something that will help us to create a real and powerful track forward. With the profound changes to the world – and the congregation – due to Covid and the impending departure of Lorel, now is the time to undertake this process of self-evaluation and future covenanting. Fern Chertok, Jocylyn Bailin, and Rabbi Breindel are currently in the process of visioning and pulling together a working group to move forward on this.

Lorel Transition: Jim Billings

We need to pull together what the Lorel transition year is going to be. What will it look like? What kind of transition are we going to have? Jim and other leadership are in the process of putting together a team that will address these issues, starting right after the high holidays. Their mission will include how we say goodbye, what kinds of events and meetings we will have, etc. All of this is, of course, complicated by Covid! Lorel is an active part of this planning process as well; that being said she has asked Beth Birnbaum to be her point of contact for all things transition-related so as to allow her to maintain her focus on all of her regular responsibilities and personal needs.

Legal Counsel: Jim Billings

Beth EL currently does not have anyone serving as legal counsel. Both Rob Wolkon and Phil Posner have served Beth El in this role and will continue to do so unofficially as needed.

However, we need someone to formally fill in this role. If you know of someone we can ask, please let Jim know.

Lydia Hughes membership: Jim Billings

After our last Board meeting, Barbara Miller reached out to Lydia and had a lovely talk. During their conversation, Lydia made a few things clear:

1. She can't participate at Beth El right now because of Covid
2. She would like to stay in touch with the Beth El community. Receiving cards and/or letters is best, as she has difficulty hearing over the phone
3. She does not feel a need at this time to be a member of Beth El

It is clear, that like many elders and singles, Lydia is feeling very lonely and isolated. She has a strong affinity for Beth El and would like to stay connected. At the same time, she has not responded to dues requests, including loving and gentle offers to negotiate abatement, for several years now. She has refused to say officially that she does or that she does not want to continue to be a member of the Beth El community.

Discussion: What does it mean to be a member of Beth El? This is not clearly defined (probably true for all synagogues). Membership has privileges (pastoral care, voting and serving on committees/Board, a funeral. Anything else?) and responsibilities (voting, oneg/kiddush, what else?). It's time to really take a look at what membership means. This is an issue facing synagogues nation and world-wide.

Discussion: detail-specific. Is it possible to maintain people as members without expecting any financial input and without any administrative expectations? Answer from Beth: no - as long as she is in our database as a member I have to spend administrative time on her. Could we create a **membership emeritus status** - for those who have been engaged with the community for a long time but are facing diminished capacity? How can we balance compassion and boundaries? To be considered

Discussion: Lydia-specific: We want to respect Lydia's autonomy, and we struggle with the idea of revoking membership to a long-time elder, even if they are not participating in any way (financially or otherwise). At the same time the administrative burden is significant and complicated. Lydia will always be welcome at Beth El; once she (or someone in her family) decides to engage with us we can officially reconnect. We will continue to discuss ways to engage our members as they age.

Motion: To lovingly and gently revoke Lydia's membership, leaving open the door for her to rejoin us at any time.

Motion approved: 10 in favor, 2 opposed, 4 abstentions.

Cynthia will draft an initial letter. Beth and Jocelyn will coordinate to create a final version and will send it to Lydia after the high holidays.

Meeting adjourned 9:05pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jocelyn Bailin
Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley

Rabbi Report August-September 2020

Ritual

- **PLEASE JOIN ME** – we're hosting a community **Selichot** service at 7:30 PM this Sat., 9/12 with clergy from Beth Am, B'nai Torah and Shir Tikva.
- **High Holidays** – Lorel and I are hard at work.
 - **Preparation for our festivals has been my major focus this month.**
 - Thank you to Lizza and her amazing team who are helping our community to feel connected and uplifted!

Lifecycle/Pastoral

- Will officiate at a **baby naming** for Marty and Judy Cohen's granddaughter this Saturday (9/12) after services. Were rained out last month.
- **Clergy meeting with congregants continue** (outside, distanced, masked)

Community outreach/events

- **MetroWest Reform rabbis** continue to meet. There's a lot of excitement around our new joint initiatives (Selichot and educational programs).
- Reaching out to **new members and prospective members**. Scott and Susan are in the loop.

Programming and education

- Working closely with **Green Team** and **Anti-racism Committee** on Elul and new initiatives for 5781.

Administrative

- Coordinating with Shoni and Scott on joint **Middle and High School** programs.
- Designing **lesson plans** for new semester – Middle and High School.

Personal

- Hope to take some time off to catch breath after Sukkot (Columbus Day week).