

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Virtual Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday October 8th, 2020 7:00pm

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

Welcome: Jim Billings

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

Hebrew With Janet: DVK – to cling, stick, adhere

L'hibadik: to be stuck or to be infected; midabeik: sticky or contagious

D'vekut: attachment, devotion, loyalty

Dybbuk: an outside force that possesses someone (it sticks to you!)

September meeting minutes: Jocylyn Bailin

Minutes approved unanimously

Rabbi's Report: see attached

Extra notes: High Holidays were... a high. They started with a hugely successful Selichot a few weeks ago and will end with Simchat Torah tomorrow (please join us!). Rabbi is exhausted and also still soaring and transcendent.

Rabbi shared a personal HiHo story with deep gratitude to Beth Schine – told the Board how the whole scissors lift thing came to be. Wow!

Administrator's Report: Beth Schine

Beth expressed thanks to everyone who helped make the High Holidays such a success.

Membership statistics:

We have 3 new and/or returning members.

We have had 9 resignations.

Our current membership number is 242.

Dues commitment forms continue to come in at a steady pace. We have received 184 to date; of those 113 are full dues, 3 chose the 3% option, and 44 are adjusted dues. This is consistent with previous years, and the average dues paid per member is consistent as well. In addition, there are 20 people who have not returned a dues commitment form but have started to pay dues anyway. And there are 38 members from whom we have not heard at all. Once the high holidays are over we will start sending out gentle reminders.

Mission/Vision/Strategic Planning: Jim Billings, Sheila Goldberg, Laurie Margolies, Fern Chertok

This is a process that is just getting underway. The rabbi, Jocylyn and Fern are currently working to build a team and establish a structure to undertake a community visioning process. The outcome of that will be a solid understanding of who we are as a community, what we stand for and who and what we want to be. This process will culminate in a Mission statement. Once we have this then a separate group will work on developing a strategic plan based off the work of the mission/vision group. The strategic plan will help us to better utilize our resources and ensure that the programs and services we are offering reflect the mission and values of the community. We expect the entire process of both groups to take approximately 18 months. The last time we undertook a strategic planning process the document itself was created but then the group handed it off and didn't ensure that there was any follow through. Lessons have been learned from this and there is an understanding and a commitment to carry the process all the way though this time. Both groups will set benchmarks and deadlines and measurable goals. Additionally, both groups will reach out to and include input from members across the spectrum of congregational life.

Fundraising: Judy Goldberg

Lorel and the rabbi have received numerous emails expressing their appreciation for the high Holidays programming this year. We decided to turn this enthusiasm and gratitude into an opportunity for people to follow up by making a monetary donation. This is the "Outpouring of Gratitude" email that we all received recently.

Judy is in the process of collecting other ideas for fundraising this year and will be leading this effort for the community. THANK YOU JUDY! PLEASE send her any suggestions you might have of ways for us to reach the fundraising goals that are cemented into our budget!

Michelle Fineblum: The Tzedakah Hevra is sponsoring an event that is sort of a fundraiser for Beth El; The event is to inform people about Yad L'Kashish, the Lifeline for the Aged in Jerusalem. Its an organization that the Hevra has supported for years, and now we are bringing an opportunity to support their work and Beth El at the same time. Join us on Sunday evening November 7th for joy, fun, and shopping! 80% of the proceeds will go to Yad L'Kashish and 20% to Beth El.

Education Report: Scott Newman

Overall the Ed program is going well. However, we are learning and realizing that Zoom fatigue is real – something that was novel when we started it last January has now become de facto for all students all day, and they simply do not have the attention/focus to do more on Zoom after being on it all day for school. It is difficult to create relationships through technology, and yet it is possible. We value Jewish learning and are adapting to the circumstances on the fly. As such we have shortened the time online and made it more content rich and meaningful. At 9am the students log on and have 10-15 minutes of tefilah and song. From 9:15-10 am they head to breakout rooms with their teachers. At 10am the students log off, and the teachers stay to create

and send curriculum for parents and children to do together. Nobody is penalized for not doing the curricular work.

This is a constantly evolving situation, very much trial-and-error. We are constantly soliciting and receiving feedback. 2-3 families have left the Education program because of virtual programming but the rest are hanging in there. We have not yet started up with the Thursday afternoon programming – when we do it will be focused on Hebrew learning and will be as much 1:1 as possible. We have not yet asked for tuition or hard enrollment commitment yet as we wanted the families to experience what we are doing and what value we can provide first. We will start reaching out to ask families to commit in October.

Education Report: Shoni

We are now officially a legitimate regional MetroWest Jewish High School! JLOFT (Jewish Learning Opportunities For Teens). Seven communities have joined together to provide programming for students in grades 8-12. This collaboration grew out of the relationships we built from the HiBur program. We started quietly around Rosh Hashana and had a more formal start around Sukkot. Instead of the students meeting all at once they can choose the track they want based both on topic and time frame. Report from Sabina Pestka: “On RH there were approximately 40 high school students in attendance. There are lots of options – you can choose your pathway and your time.” This programming is really cementing Congregation Beth El as the center for Jewish teen learning in MetroWest. It will help us keep our kids here and help us to connect with the broader local Jewish community. HiBur will become part of the JLOFT umbrella.

The Middle school program (6th/7th grade) is also a collaborative, but with only three congregations total. They meet on Wednesday evenings. This program is still evolving, and the three communities are figuring out how best they want to work together. We are slowly but surely breaking down resistance to traditional barriers and building goodwill.

Green Team Report: Jerry Kazin with Barry Sheingold

Two huge accomplishments! 1) starting next month all of our BE electricity will be generated with no carbon impact. 2) We had a free energy audit and discovered several areas where we could make improvements in our building. The attic is poorly insulated; the program we worked with will open up the walls, blow in cellulose insulation, and seal up any leaky areas. Best of all, all this work will be done for free (grants)!

Meeting adjourned 8:33pm

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).