

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday November 14th, 2019 7:30pm

In attendance: Judy Goldberg, Michael Brown, Aaron Friedman, Andy Goldberg, Steve Probst, Marla Lewitus, Susan Tohn, Mike Joachim, Marcos Szydlo, Jim Billings, Debbie Glass, John Harper, Jesse Wertheimer, Justin Lewitus, Toby Kopman, Jocylyn Bailin, Laurie Margolies, Scott Newman, Beth Schine, Neil Frieband, Rabbi Breindel

Hebrew with Janet: *Mitzvah and Tzedaka*

Complete with even a Tortoise (Tzav)!

Welcome: Judy Goldberg

“And so we meet again!”

Approval of Minutes: Jocylyn Bailin

Motion: To approve minutes from 10/10/19 Board meeting. *Motion passed unanimously.*

Rabbi Report: Rabbi Breindel

Ritual

- **Sukkot and Yizkor/Simchat Torah** services
- **Bar mitzvah ceremonies** for Adam Wright and Ezra Green-Vaswani. Please join us this Saturday as Ashi Pestka is called to the Torah!

Community outreach/events

- Attended **CJP event with Shoni on Boston/Haifa connection** on 10/30. Mazal tov to **Justin** for his superb address (the only American student to speak that night)!
- I will be teaching on the Golem at **Limmud Boston at 9:00 AM this Sunday, Nov. 17**. Several Beth El members will be participating in different events and panels.
- Will deliver the **benediction at Sudbury’s interfaith Thanksgiving event** at 4:00 PM on Sunday, Nov. 24th at First Parish of Sudbury.
- Will give a **blessing at Lincoln/Sudbury High School** at noon on Wed. Nov 27 for their Seniors Serving Seniors event.
- Recorded a segment for **Chagigah (on WERS)** for their Thanksgiving show. Should air around 9:30 AM on Sunday 11/24.
- Reaching out to **Sudbury and Natick libraries** for Chanukah storytime events.

Programming and education

- Joined with **HiBuR in Boston on Monday 10/21**.
- Began **Jewish Stories series** on Sundays. Until January, will have 45 minutes of schmooze (similar to Open Door events last year) and 45 minutes of class. Will transition to 1.5 hour sessions in January.

Administrative

- Partnering with Judy and Nominating Committee on **gathering a new leadership candidate cohort**.

Personal

- Will be taking off Thanksgiving week (Tues. 11/25-Tues. 12/3). Thanks to Jocylyn for finding Shabbat coverage for me.

Temple Administrator's report: Beth Schine

- Current **membership** number is 246 families. Since July 1st we have had 16 resignations and 5 new members. 236 Financial commitment forms have been received as of today; the remaining 10 are likely "at risk" members.
- **Wine Tasting Fundraiser** preliminary results: Revenue \$24,265. Expenses \$7, 832. Net intake: \$16,633. There may yet be outstanding expenses; Beth will have final numbers next month. Danny's Liquor in Sudbury donated all the wine – great guy, great store, please patronize when possible!
- **Door fobs update.** At this time the teachers have fobs and the high school students have fobs. The parents of students in PK-6th grade will receive fobs this coming Sunday. Have not yet figured out what the protocol will be for getting fobs out to the congregation at large. Also have not figured out what we should do if someone comes for services/programs (either a non-member or a member who forgot their fob) and there is not anyone at the door to let them in. Currently the policy remains for each family to receive one fob (excepting high school students/families) and anyone desiring a second fob will need to pay for it. This is problematic for many constituencies – ex: school families that have one person drop off the child and another pick up, households where one person comes to Torah study and another only for services, etc. Beth is asking the Board to reconsider the policy approved last month and to allow each adult member to receive their own fob. The cost for each fob is just under \$2; to order 500 fobs would cost \$900.
- **Motion:** Amend fob policy to permit any family to ask for and receive a second fob at no cost. ***Motion approved** (with one objection).*
- **Proposal** from the floor: To implement an across-the-board **security fee** of \$36/ member household.
- **Discussion:** Many congregations are implementing a security fee. Many of these fees are higher than \$36. This fee spreads out the cost for extras like extra police details, fobs, cameras, etc. and would cover our ongoing extra security costs. Question raised as to whether the \$36 could simply be rolled into regular dues, noting on the forms that \$36 of each dues was earmarked for security. Mike J. noted that the congregation had already allocated \$3,000 for security for this year; is wondering if that was enough to cover our expenses for this year.
- It was agreed that the **Finance Committee** will review costs and expenses and make [a] recommendation/s at the December board meeting.

Tsibur (House) report: Jim Billings

- The handicap-accessible bathroom doors are being installed in the next few days.
- The light fixture for the driveway entrance will be installed within the next two weeks.
- There have been extensive energy-saving lighting changes throughout the building (interior and exterior) over the course of the past month. MassSave came and did an energy audit; most of the changes have come at little or no cost to Beth El.

Endowment Fundraiser (Carob Tree II): Ellen Glickman-Simon and Mary K. Eliot

(Mary K. is the nonprofit consultant who helped with the original Carob Tree Initiative).

Rabbi Breindel: Shared the story of Honi and the Carob Tree as an introduction. The takeaway? Live in the present, plan for the future.

Mary K: Most congregations have a line item in the budget for fundraising that is 20-25% of their operating budget. It used to be that synagogues could rely on dues, now they can't. Carob Tree I ran from 2005-2007. Ultimately it raised close to \$1.4 million dollars. About \$1 million went into the endowment and the rest was spread out for various needs, including Torah repairs and operating budget. Just about \$100K came in from small tribute donations (in honor/memory of someone; to celebrate a milestone; thank-you's, etc.). Every year the Carob Tree Fund sends \$35K to the operating budget. This comes from the interest not the principle.

Visioning Exercise: *"If you are sitting here, in this room, three years from now, what is making you happy and feeling good about Beth El"*

Small-group results:

1. Updated building and property
2. 350 engaged families
3. 2-3 more full-time staff
4. Green team actualizes goals
5. 150 students in the school
6. More communal spaces that are inviting and user-friendly
7. Funds available for communal needs (like scholarships)
8. We are a desirable destination for metro west community
9. A full parking lot all day long (building is better utilized!)
10. Financial solvency
11. Strong membership retention
12. Gender neutral bathrooms
13. greater connection/integration with broader local community (Jewish and non-Jewish)
14. Better utilization of existing spaces – courtyard, loft, library.

Mary K: having a larger endowment will provide money to allow Beth El to realize these goals and more. Mary will come back to the Board in January to help us assign dollar amounts to our wish list. The goal of the Carob Tree II initiative is to raise additional funds (no target amount specified yet) to meet our needs for the moment and going forward. This campaign particularly hopes to target asset donations instead of families' operating funds, though donations of all types will of course be accepted.

Judy G: Private funds have been used to pay Mary K.'s fees through December. At that point we will need to decide if we want to go forward with this initiative, using Beth El funds.

Action steps for the Board: we need to talk and decide if we want to undertake a Carob tree II; in order to do so we need to understand why we are doing this. Judy will call a special Board meeting in January to spend more time on this,

Discussion:

- We consistently have a \$100K hole in the budget. Carob Tree I provides \$35K to fill that. We cannot possibly expect CT II to generate another \$65K/year.
- Right now we aren't even paying for what we are using. If we build up our endowment we can generate funds to build up our membership, which will in turn

generate more funds. We need to raise the money to do the things we need to do to close the gap.

- What about Donor Fatigue? This is a big concern. Mary K. noted that in general the fatigue is more about the mindset than the money. If we explain carefully and consistently why we are raising these funds then people will participate. We should set specific positive goals and show results. This will encourage others to give further.

Next Steps: Ellen and Mary K. will review and compile the input from the Board as well as input they have gathered from staff and lay leadership.

Creating a new Ritual Committee: Judy Goldberg

Toby has resigned as the VP Tefilah. The Nom-Nom Nominating Committee and the clergy have been unable to find someone to take on the VP role. As such we are experimenting with a different mode for Ritual planning, one that is more specifically task-based. We are looking for volunteers to take on projects; the first of these is planning the Beth El community Hanukah celebration in late December. Please talk with Judy if you are interested in coordinating this effort.

5-second Tikkun Olam Report: John Harper

Beth El has a small but active core of members who call themselves the Green Team. They have been active politically and organizationally at both the local and state level. They are looking for more people to join in with the work they are doing. There will be an informational meeting this coming Sunday at 10:15am. Please come if you can.

Meeting adjourned 9:15pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jocelyn Bailin

Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley