

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday December 19th, 2019 7:30pm

In attendance: Judy Goldberg, Michael Brown, Andy Goldberg, Steve Probst, Marla Lewitus, Susan Tohn, Mike Joachim, Debbie Glass, Justin Lewitus, Toby Kopman, Jocylyn Bailin, Laurie Margolies, Scott Newman, Beth Schine, Neil Frieband, Rabbi Breindel, Gabriel DeBrito, Shoni Aronovich, Sheila Goldberg

Hebrew with Janet: *To Light and be Enlightened*
The Chanukah Edition

Welcome: Judy Goldberg
"And so we meet again!"

Approval of Minutes: Jocylyn Bailin

Motion: To approve minutes from 11/14/19 Board meeting. *Motion passed unanimously*

Security Fee Update – Mike Joachim

The Finance Committee has asked for more time to consider the addition of a security fee. They would like to get a better sense of the expenses and tie it to actual costs. We also need to decide what security measures we want to take on. For example, if we are going to hire people to sit at the entry doors and let people in (during times we are open but want the doors locked), we need to factor that in. We need to calculate the actual cost for the keypads, fobs, extra police security details, and such. There was some discussion as to whether we would assess this as an extra (separate) security fee, roll it into the building fund fees, roll it into the dues, or some other measure. The Finance Committee will discuss this at their January meeting and report back to the Board.

Parsonage Amounts for Rabbi and Cantor – Neil Frieband

Motion to approve requested parsonage amounts for Rabbi Breindel and Cantor Lorel Zar-Kessler for 2020 calendar year. LZK is requesting \$54,924.30. RJB is requesting \$64,000.

Motion approved unanimously

Rabbi Report: Rabbi Breindel

Ritual

Bar mitzvah ceremonies for Ashi Pestka and Sam Doyle. Zoe Yale will be called to the Torah on Jan. 25.

Community outreach/events

- Taught on the Golem at Limmud Boston on Sunday, Nov. 17. Looking forward to opportunity to teach next year.
- Delivered reflection and benediction at Sudbury's interfaith Thanksgiving event.
- Offered blessing at Lincoln/Sudbury High School for Seniors Serving Seniors.
- Will record a segment for Chagigah (on WERS) for their Chanukah show. Should air 10:00-10:30 this Sunday.

- Visiting Sudbury libraries for Chanukah story time the morning of Thurs. 12/26.

Programming and education

- Working with Cynthia and Shoni on our community Chanukah party (next Thursday, 12/26, starting at 5:00). 55 people currently RSVP'd.
- Partnering with Rev. Tom at Memorial Congregational Church for an interfaith MLK commemoration at Beth El at 3:00 on Sun 1/19. Please join in this musical experience honoring Dr. King's legacy.

Administrative

- New leadership candidate cohort initiative: currently have 7 of 10 candidates. Will be working with URJ resources as well.
- Will participate in IJS clergy leadership retreat. Will be away 1/12-18. Thank you to Jocelyn for her help in finding coverage for Shabbat (Friday 1/17 and Sat. 1/18).

Personal

- Will be taking off two consecutive Sunday-Wednesday (12/22-25 and 12/29-1/1). Will miss erev Shabbat on 12/27

Temple Administrator's report: Beth Schine

- Current **membership** number is 245 families. We have had one resignation in the past month (due to moving away).
- **Door fobs update:** Fobs have been distributed to all students and (almost) all parents. Distribution to the wider congregant community is rolling out slowly. Those who use the building the most during the week are receiving them first. Board members will receive their fobs tonight! Default settings for the fobs are for them to work during office hours, Shabbat (both Friday and Saturday) from Torah study through kiddush, and Sunday mornings when Adult Ed programs are taking place. Access for any large community events can easily be added to all fobs.
- **Lighting update:** The light at the entrance to the parking lot has been installed and is functioning! In addition, all the lights throughout the building (both interior and exterior) have been updated. All fixtures – even the chandeliers! – now have LED lights. All dimmer switches are identical and compatible with the lighting. We discovered that there are lighting bollards all set for lights on the road-facing side of the building (where our name is) and new lighting will be installed there soon. We also discovered the existing wires for the lighting on the far side of the parking lot; those will be connected next week. All outside lights are on timers, so there is no need – and indeed no ability – to turn them on or off from inside the building. All wires inside and outside the building have been traced and everything has been documented. A **HUGE shout out of gratitude to David Waldman** for all of this work. As a bonus, due to David's diligence and a good partnership/programs through MassSave all this was done with minimal cost.
- **Walkway:** The walkway repair will need to wait until spring, as any repair done during winter weather will not last. Jim is planning to do some temporary stabilization/repair fixes in the next couple of weeks.
- **Weekend Coordinator:** Laurie Margolies and Beth have been working together to find someone to replace Kim. They have been advertising for over a year with no success. The hours are Friday evenings and Saturday mornings through midday. Ideally the person would be available on Sunday mornings as well, though that is not essential. Pay is in the \$15-\$20/hour range (we might need to offer more). If you

know someone who might be interested in the position or have ideas on how to find someone, please let Beth and Laurie know.

Thanking volunteers: the question of how we recognize and thank volunteers was brought up briefly. Discussion was tabled for today and will be revisited at another time.

Beth El Climate and Sustainability Resolution: Stephen Breit and Barry Sheingold

- Presentation of Beth El Climate and Sustainability statement, carried over from October Board meeting. The statement is a resolution, not a motion, asking that the Board of Congregation Beth El acknowledge the urgency of the climate crisis and state that as a congregation we will endeavor to address the items spelled out in the three bullet points. If the resolution is approved, the Green team will then be setting goals and coming up with action plans, both for the congregation as an entity and for congregants to undertake in their own homes and communities.
- Discussion revolved around the desire to urge people to take action and the equal desire to not pressure or shame people for not doing so. Stephen and Barry noted that voting on this resolution is a statement that we acknowledge the seriousness of the issue; it does not commit nor compel anyone to any particular action. Any actions that may be suggested in the future that require Board support or action will be brought to the Board.

Motion to approve and adopt the Beth El Climate and Sustainability Resolution.
Motion approved unanimously with one abstention

Ritual Committee: Toby Kopman and Judy Goldberg

Toby is stepping down effective immediately as the VP of Tefilah/Ritual. This will be her last Board meeting. Toby addressed the Board stating it has been an honor and a privilege to serve the congregation and work with the Board. No official VP replacement is in place; for the time being Lizza will represent the Ritual Committee at Board meetings. Lorel and Rabbi Josh are shepherding the effort to re-form the Ritual Committee. They held a meeting on December 12th that was well attended; the majority of those present signed up to help with specific events and/or tasks.

Youth and Family Education Committee proposal: Scott Newman, Marla Lewitus, Sheila Goldberg

Proposal

Resolved that the recommendation of the Youth and Family Education Committee to restructure the third through sixth grade "BEInSpirEd Program" to include an online learning component for Hebrew and to extend Sunday classes by one hour, replacing the current Thursday afternoon session be approved by the Board of Directors and the authority given to the Youth and Family Education Committee to implement such changes.

Presentation

- **Background:** The current structure of the BEInSpirED program for grades 3-6 is 2.5 hours (with 2 hours of programming) on Sunday mornings and 2 hours on Thursday

afternoons. Over the years attendance on Sundays has been consistently high, in the 85-95% range. In the past few years attendance on Thursdays has dropped significantly, from 80% in 2016 to 50% in 2019. The lack of attendance on Thursday afternoons has presented a serious challenge to the integrity of the education program, affecting not only Thursday programming (what do you do with half a class) but Sunday programming as well (need to repeat information for the half that missed; can't go forward as much with programming that is educational for all; difficult to build community when community isn't consistently together, etc.).

- **The YFEC surveyed families** with students in grades 2-6 about the BEInSpirED program. They asked multiple questions about the program, looking at all angles. Examples (non-comprehensive) include: Which weekday is the best for your family? Would providing dinner for students and families on a weekday afternoon help? What are the biggest obstacles to your child attending the Ed program on weekdays? The results from the survey indicated that for the vast majority of respondents (73.3%) attending the program on a weekday afternoon is difficult for them, with scheduling and transportation proving the biggest challenges. No one weekday was really better than any other (Thursdays held a slight advantage, possibly because it's already the existing day), and respondents were split 50/50 as to whether providing dinner would be helpful or not. The survey also asked if extending the program on Sunday mornings would a) be better for their family and b) would they attend. 66.6% of the respondents said this would work for them. YFEC noted that this is better than the 50% attendance rate for Thursdays.
- **Brainstorming:** The YFEC reviewed the data and met to come up with a new proposal. The current afternoon program consists of 45 min or so of Hebrew language learning and 45 minutes of broadly defined Torah learning.
- **Hebrew learning** will take place online with a program called **Shalom Learning**. Shalom Learning is currently widely in use in varied parts of the Jewish world and is well reviewed and well respected. It is self-paced and rigorous but is not a live class. Students would be required to log in at least once a week and spend a total of 30-40 minutes with the program. The students complete the assignments and check them in online. The teacher can then check the work and give feedback to the student. This would not happen in real time, but ideally (and hopefully) teacher response will happen within 24 hours. Students can still make an appointment to come in person for 1:1 Hebrew tutoring. This ends up potentially being more beneficial and more rigorous than our current Hebrew learning, which requires not insignificant in-class wait time for the teacher to get to every student. Shalom Learning makes it possible for the program to be individualized, meaning we can add our own content for our own students. Parents need to monitor that their kids go online and complete the lesson, but this will take less time than driving back and forth to Beth El. There is also a mobile interface to the program; ideally it works best from a laptop or desktop but the work could be done by mobile, adding additional flexibility. Beth El will ensure that every student has access to a computer and the Internet.
- Additional **Torah learning** will be incorporated into the Sunday curriculum, which will be extended by an hour. The extended time allows for longer projects and more integrated curriculum planning. Options such as STEM, art, dance, sTorah telling and more become viable curriculum options. Snacks would be provided. Every 4-6 weeks there would be a Family Learning program; on those days lunch would be served.

- **YFEC is proposing this on a trial basis.** Try it for several months and see how it works. They will constantly be evaluating and tweaking the program from week to week as necessary. YFEC will come back to the Board in June with evaluations and feedback, and the program will be revisited at that time. If it works that's great, if it doesn't we can go back to our previous model or innovate in other ways.

Questions

- **Q:** Are the teachers on board with this?
- **A:** Yes, they are excited about the online learning and relieved to have a solution to the attendance issue.
- **Q:** This third hour programming doesn't sound like Torah learning. Are we dumbing down our program?
- **A:** Our program will still be comprehensive and rigorous; the extra time affords us opportunities to approach the same material with different modalities. For example, STEM and art activities would still be Torah related.
- **Q:** three hours straight of programming has its challenges – this is equivalent to half a school day at many schools. How will kids react?
- **A:** They already dislike Thursdays and half aren't coming anyway. If we keep the program lively and change it up they should manage just fine.
- **Q:** Does the extended time create space challenges in the building (for example with Torah class or other events)?
- **A:** This will not be a problem.
- **Q:** How and when will this be evaluated?
- **A:** Through multiple modalities: 1) attendance (families will vote with their feet). 2) educator feedback 3) student knowledge 4) parent feedback 5) asking and observing. Rubrics for evaluation are being developed.
- **Q:** when would this change take place?
- **A:** If the proposal is approved we are ready to roll with this and implement the change in January when students come back from break. Scott and faculty have already been setting up the Shalom Learning and brainstorming/planning curriculum. The Shalom Learning and discontinuation of the in-building Thursday program will begin right away; the extension of the Sunday program will begin on January 26th.

Motion: To approve the YFEC restructuring of the 3-6th BEInSpirED program on a trial basis. The YFEC will evaluate and report back to the Board in June. *Motion approved unanimously*

Rainbow Flag Display: Michael Brown

Michael noted that several religious organizations prominently display large rainbow LGBTQ flags on their buildings. He would like Beth El to do the same.

Discussion: Multiple points brought up.

- 1) We have discussed this in the past. We even purchased a flag years ago, but never could determine where or how to put it up.
- 2) Another possibility - instead of a flag, put a larger sticker on our sign.
- 3) There are lots of statements we could make and lots of flags we could display. How are we to decide what statements are more important and deserve more visibility than others?

- 4) There are newer flags that are more inclusive – they include not just the familiar LGBTQ rainbow but also the colors of the asexual, pansexual, transgender, bisexual, intersex, agender and non-binary pride movements. Lizza brought up an image.
- 5) There are flags of this nature with the Mogen David superimposed.

The Rabbi spoke up in favor of getting and displaying the most inclusive flag possible with the Mogen David superimposed. We should be proud to let the world know that we are accepting and inclusive of everybody.

Motion: to procure a new, large, multi-inclusive flag with the Mogen David on it.

Motion approved

Meeting adjourned 9:55pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jocelyn Bailin

Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley