

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Virtual Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday December 9th, 2021 7:00pm

In attendance: Ann Barysh, Barbara Miller, Carolyn Schwartz, Cynthia Myersberg, 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, Rabbi Josh Breindel. Guests: Ann Kramer, Cat Kaner

Welcome: Jim Billings

Good to see everyone again – thanks for being here and Happy Hannukah!

Hebrew with Janet: Vayigash – to draw close, have a steady approach, reduce conflict. May this be true for the work of this Board and for our country!

November Meeting Minutes: Approved unanimously

Temple Administrator's Report: Beth Schine

Current membership: 232

Since my last report on 11/15, one new member household: Sara and Kip Bodi, daughters Lucy, 7 yrs; Beatrice, 4 yrs; Kira, 3 yrs)

Dues Collected YTD: \$354,393

Financial commitments resolved:

- Full Dues: 120
 - 13 (of the 120) made additional dues commitments, ranging from \$100 – \$2,400
 - 7 (of the 120) made additional donations to other funds ranging from totals of \$100 - \$6,000
 - One is in 2nd year of incentive, paying full 50% dues
- 26 are paying 3% dues
- 60 have dues adjustments
- 5 are on free membership

There are currently 21 unresolved financial commitments. Of those, eight have either made payment or initiated conversation, 13 have not made any contact re: dues. Beth will be making calls to these 13 starting next week.

Steve P noted that this dues report is pretty much in alignment with previous years.

Rabbi's Report: Rabbi Breindel

Full report attached

Additional items:

- It's time for Beth El to grow, stretch, and try new things. I am determined to do this personally, am trying this with my own study and teachings.
- I am currently working with two prospective converts!
- The Hannukah story hour at the Goodnow library was successful – we have two new families investigating Beth El.
- I have located and hired an Executive Coach.
- **Rabbi charge to Board members:** *PLEASE come to services – in person if possible, online if in person not possible. Our community needs to see you there, our perspective members need to see you there, your rabbi needs to see you there. Our community is not a community without our presence; a big part of Jewish leadership is showing up.*

Education Report: Scott Newman

- The Hannukah program was incredibly successful. We had 75 registered attendees – 45 adults and 30 children. This is by far the most successful intergenerational event we have pulled off – ages in attendance ranged from our youngest to some of our oldest members! It took great coordination between the school, ritual, and social action and the YFEC.
- Book Drive collected over 600 books

COVID Task Force Jim Billings

It is of no surprise to anyone that Covid is on the rise again. Therefore, we need to make some changes. These are the recommendations from the Covid Task Force:

1. Limit activities in the building. Services and school can still take place, people should not be in the building if they don't have a reason to be there. The Chinese food portion of the Christmas Eve event will be canceled; the movie screening will still happen. School dinners will not happen.
2. We will request that everyone who enters the building sign in for contact tracing purposes. Additionally, anyone over the age of 5 must attest to their vaccination status. This is on the honor system.
3. Everyone in the building must be fully vaccinated.
4. Everyone must remain masked inside the building, except those staff who are able to sit behind a closed door (they must remain masked when outside of that space).
5. Clergy and service leaders must remain masked unless they have a negative self-test. Torah readers can unmask if they have tested negative that morning; otherwise they can read masked.
6. Staff will continue weekly rapid testing and document their results.
7. If you have any symptoms, even if it appears to "just" be a cold, stay home.

Discussion:

What does it mean to be fully vaccinated"? Two shots? Two plus booster? We should clarify. We should not require full vaccination for kids. For our youngest students there hasn't been enough time for them to be fully vaccinated. Scott and Marla agree that separate discussions

regarding rules for the school and Covid should take place outside the Board meeting. Decisions made will be communicated directly to school families.

What about those who cannot get vaccinated for medical reasons? Response: We have made a tremendous effort to make everything we do accessible online. Someone who is unvaccinated, for whatever reason, can participate fully in our community virtually, they do not have to be in the building.

Are we going to require vaccination card proof? It was noted that (unofficially, this is not via official survey) many other synagogues are requiring proof of vaccination prior to entry.

Response: At this time we are relying on an honor system.

We should make it clear that masks must be worn correctly at all times (over mouth and nose).

Motion: *to approve the recommendations of the Covid committee with the following addendums: 1) there will be wording included about proper mask wearing, 2) the rules about signing in will be clear, and 3) the rules for school families, specifically young children, will be crafted between the Covid committee and the YFEC and communicated to/implemented with the school population.*

Motion Approved: *unanimously*

Parsonage: Steve Probst

Every year the clergy are allowed to set aside a certain portion of their salary to be designated as parsonage. This is a legal nicety, and we do this every year. It must be approved by the Board.

Motion: *To approve the following amount submitted by Rabbi Breindel for their Calendar 2021 parsonage designations:*

Rabbi Breindel: \$66,000

Motion Approved: *unanimously*

Membership update: Ann Barysh, Ann Kramer

Presentation made.

Social Media: We urgently need a social media person to take on and manage all our social media outreach. We will send an appeal to the congregation; in the meantime, if you know someone personally who is skilled in this area and willing to do it, please have them reach out to Ann & Ann (“the Anns”) ASAP. To be honest, though, this is too important to hand off to a volunteer. We need to have a paid person responsible for this, whether it be our current staff or a paid part-time publicity/social media person. We are urgently requesting that the Board address this deficit ASAP.

New member families: We put together and delivered a Hannukah basket to 5 new member families. They were delighted! We met two other new families at the Hanukah event. We are in the process of planning a face-to-face meeting with all of our new members; if Covid allows it will be in person, if not it will be via Zoom with an in-person meeting scheduled as soon as it is safe to do so.

Breaking down silos: We solicited input from our school and young families as to how to make the entire Beth El experience more inviting and welcoming. Here is some of the feedback we received:

1. Have more intergenerational events – activities where people make or do things together
2. Have child-friendly services in parallel with adult services
3. Have adult learning opportunities and committee meetings take place on Sunday mornings when the adults are already in the building.

Volunteerism: Our members will volunteer if we ask them. **BUT** it must be a clear, specific, and well-coordinated ask and task. The expectations and boundaries must be clear, there must be clear lines of responsibility, there must be sufficient levels of communication, and, lastly, appropriate gratitude expressed for work well done. So far we aren't good at any of these – this needs to change.

Responses:

1. We have in-house members who are experienced with social media, publicity, and PR. We should and will be reaching out to them.
2. Along those lines, Helen Shik has generously offered to the Board, staff, and committee members, to give courses and a writeup on how to do publicity/PR/marketing.

Jim will coordinate with the Strategic Planning Committee to work on making these workshops happen.

Thank you to “the Anns” for all your hard work and clear presentation.

Member photos: Jim Billings

Huge Thank You! To Jerry for putting up all our Siyyum and Hannukat Banim photos on the members-only section of our website. Not only are they all up there, they are all searchable! Kol Hakavod!

Executive Session invoked 8:26pm

Meeting adjourned: 9:34pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jocelyn Bailin

Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley

With assistance from Steve Probst

Attached Reports:

Rabbi Report

Tikkun Olam

Rabbi Report Nov-Dec 2021

Ritual

- Coordinating visit with our **second guest Shabbat leader, Rabbi Lev Friedman**
 - Board presence at these Shabbatot (and special events)
- I've been stretching myself with divrei Torah (justice, visual tefilah, guided meditations) to positive reaction.

Lifecycle/Pastoral

- Led **funeral for Sandy Block** with Lorel (at family's request)
- Speaking with **two prospective converts** about beginning formal training
- **Among congregation: much fatigue, anxiety.** "Maintaining balance."

Community outreach/events

- I **convened the MetroWest rabbis** who have partnered with our community Shavuot celebrations to see about future collaborations
- Shared **petition from the anti-racism group** to the local interfaith clergy around revising some of the historical signs in Sudbury referring to the "Indian" wars.
- Participating in the **MetroWest Jewish Day School gala** as a rabbi/parent.
- Coordinated **Goodnow Library Chanukah story time.** 50 registrations as well as membership prospects. Scott will reach out to them about future events.

Programming and education

- Offered **one-shot Chanukah class on dreidels** – working to attract school parents.
- **Participated in congregational Chanukah event** last Saturday evening. Fun!
- Began **three-part series for JLCMW Middle School** 12/8, 12/15, 12/22

Administrative

- Ongoing meetings with: **Strategic Plan committee, Education staff and committee, Ritual committee, Search Committee, Anti-Semitism taskforce**
- Meeting with **new and prospective members**
- Coordinating with **professional staff** individually and collectively.

Professional Development

- Pursuing grant opportunities for **executive coaching** to help me with time management and work-flow prioritization (helpful, given Lorel's retirement).
- I will be attending the **CLI retreat** from 1/10-14. Perhaps in person, perhaps through Zoom. We have a sub for services on Friday and I'll return for Saturday services. I will arrange pastoral coverage and inform the office.

Personal

- Will be **taking off winter vacation week (12/26-1/2)**, includes one Shabbat (subs set, still working on Torah study). I'll arrange pastoral coverage with the office.

Tikkun Olam Update – December 2021

Please read about the many ways our fellow congregants are engaged in repairing the world -- *Tikkun Olam* -- and consider joining. Email tikkunolambethel@gmail.com if I've missed anything or if you don't see contact info. *Thanks to all for your important and holy work!*

Youth & Family Ed and Tikkun Olam Collaborating for a Purpose: Book Drive is Now!

Children's book drive is now! The Tikkun Olam and Family Education Committees are partnering to help the generation learn the meaning of repairing the world. Is home overflowing with children's books? Bring your used (or new) children's books to Beth El by Sunday, We've joined with the [Friends of the Framingham](#) ensure your books go to those most in need in the Framingham community. (For those who attended Beth wonderful Chanukah celebration, admission was one gently used book for the book drive. We now have 12 books to donate and would love to collect more for this cause!) Contact Scott Newman, Education Director, for more info.



Youth & next your gently 12/12. [Library to](#) El's new or boxes of good

The Youth & Family Education Program and Tikkun Olam Committee are planning more joint activities to turn our values into action! Watch this space for news of our next collaboration! Contact Sheila Goldberg for more info.

Antiracism Working Group: This month:

The topic of the Antiracism Learning Group (formerly "Book Group") discussion was the seminal book "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison. Originally published in 1952, this searing novel about what it's like to be Black in America speaks as powerfully today as it did when it was written. A rich discussion was facilitated by Dr. Bernie Horn, member of Beth El and professor emeritus at Framingham State University. Dr. Horn taught this book in his American Novel class for many years.

On November 9, Beth El participated in the Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism's National Call-in Campaign for Voting Rights. Twenty-one Beth El members and friends made a total of 63 calls to President Biden and our two U.S. Senators.

The Antiracism Working Group is sponsoring a holiday gift drive for youth served by **All Things Art, Inc.** in Roxbury. All Things Art offers creative activities to low-income youth who live with difficult circumstances in under-resourced Boston communities. The program's inspiring Founder and Executive Director, Latanya Henderson, recently spoke at Beth El as part of a panel discussion on *Bending the Criminal (In)justice System Toward Justice*. Click [here](#) for information about how to donate a gift or gift card or make a monetary donation.

Group contacts: Judy Goldberg and Karen Blumenfeld (antiracism@BethElSudbury.org)

Green Team:

December's Climate Menschen are Cat and Alex Kaner! Repurposed, upcycled, repaired, and rarely thrown out – that's their theme. Lots of reusing and recycling of all sorts of items. They're efficient on their electricity and heating use, and source 50% of their remaining electricity needs from a green energy retailer. Cat works from home, so her commute is very fuel-efficient, and they're planning on a used, either hybrid or electric car for their next vehicle. Cat and Alex buy local foods, compost their kitchen waste, and have planted four new trees in the yard through [Framingham High's Treeplenish chapter](#). End result – a reduced carbon footprint and this month's Climate Menschen! Read more at the Green Team webpage: www.bethelsudbury.org/repair-the-world/green-team/

December 15th Green Challenge webinar - Ready to take action? Ready to commit to taking action next year? Wondering what has the biggest impact? Come to the Green Team's December 15th webinar on the MassEnergize/Jewish Climate Action Network/Beth El Green Team Green Challenge! Join over 70 Beth El households already signed up. See [this link to sign up for the webinar](#); more info in the Mah Chadash newsletter.

It's sunny in January! The Green Team plans a webinar next month on Greening your Home Electricity. Many ways to tap the sun. Date to be announced soon. Can't wait? Contact John Harper to get a link to the solar webinar from earlier this year.

Have you asked someone yet about climate change, and the impacts on your life? On Yom Kippur, the Rabbi set us a challenge to "...ask one other person, a congregant, a family member or a friend, to have a conversation where you can share your concerns about how these problems affect us and future generations." Climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe suggests connecting over shared values like family, community, and religion. See her Ted talk: www.ted.com/talks/katharine_hayhoe_the_most_important_thing_you_can_do_to_fight_climate_change_talk_about_it#t-330124

Are you thinking about an EV? Two webinars for you! Or Atid has a primer on EVs on December 14th. See the attached. Wondering about EVs on long road trips? The Green Energy Consumers Alliance has an EV chat on December 16th talking about just this question. Contact John Harper for registration info or go to www.greenenergyconsumers.org/

Sign up for the GreenTeam list-serv by emailing greenteam-subscribe@members.bethelsudbury.org

Have questions? Contact John Harper at jpharper47@gmail.com to connect with a Green Team person.

Sanctuary Committee:

We're really happy to report that the Sanctuary Committee has met and exceeded our final fundraising for the refugee family we have been supporting during the process of their request for asylum status. We (and the family) are tremendously grateful to the congregation for the support we have all experienced. This has been a holy and joyous act, and one that expresses our values and our obligations -- both ancient and modern -- as Jews. Many thanks to everyone!

We're going to be doing some work on state legislative bills affecting immigrants and refugees.

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 (kathleenbean@gmail.com). For info on Friday afternoon stand-outs or other Sanctuary Committee activities, contact Carl Offner (carl.offner@comcast.net).

Blood Drive:

The next Beth El American Red Cross Blood drive will be held on Tuesday, January 11, 2022 from 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM. The current need for all blood types is critically high. To sign up to donate please [click here](#). To sign up to help staff the drive, [please click here](#). Any questions - please contact Jordan Oshlag at JordanOshlag@gmail.com

Support and Connection for Beth El members:

Hevra Mishpacha, Beth El's caring community initiative, continues to facilitate support between members of the congregation. If you or anyone you know would appreciate and/or benefit from a friendly call, a ride, a warm meal, an extra set of hands, or anything else you can think of, please don't hesitate to reach out to Jocelyn Bailin or Carol Sheingold. If you'd like to volunteer to be part of the support network, please contact either of these two folks as well!

Inclusion Committee:

We have started having conversations with members and with the Appearance Committee about gender neutral bathrooms.

For more information about the Inclusion Committee, contact Susan Tohn at susanleetohn@gmail.com.

MetroWest Free Medical Program:

The big news is that we've hired a new Executive Director, Danielle Kehoe! Danielle was formerly Director of Advancement at the Learning Center for the Deaf in Framingham. Her expertise will help us more quickly ramp up our patient care activities and maintain the Program on a firm financial footing.

As we've told you in previous reports, we're seeing patients in person. We saw our first Women's Health patients in June and the first Adult Medicine patients in August. Our first Vision clinic was held on October 25. 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 protocols. We're taking the usual Covid precautions you would encounter in any doctor's office (pre-screening, patients waiting in their cars, etc.). We are continuing to meet the needs of many other patients virtually. The Program is about to "go live" with its Athena Health 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 recordkeeping. We have also received several new grants which indicate our funders' continued confidence in our Program and its mission.

With all that's happening, *we need more volunteers.* 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 and Social Workers for volunteer positions. Just as importantly, we need more non-clinicians who can help out with administrative tasks like patient registration and work at the discharge desk. Please contact our Clinical Coordinator, Sandra Dickie sandra@metrowestfreemedicalprogram.org for more info.

Tzedaka Hevra:

Interested in expanding the reach of your Tzedakah but aren't quite sure how? Our Hevra meets every two months to learn about Jewish charitable organizations in the United States and Israel that are helping people and changing the world...and to enjoy a communal meal, because - Beth El. We currently fund about 25 charitable organizations and are looking ahead to next year, expecting an increasing need of our funds. During our meetings, we learn about and determine which organizations are worthy of our funding and reflect our priorities. We often hear directly from their representatives about the work they do, what they will do with our funds, and what they plan to do in the future. If you want to give but may not have time to research and understand enough about the wide range of charitable organizations in need of money, consider joining our Hevra, which is open to any Beth El member. We welcome new members. For info, email Ira Silver isilver@framingham.edu.

Tzedek Scholarship Fund:

The committee has selected a new scholarship recipient for the 2021-22 academic year. To date we have funded seven students, all of whom have graduated. For info: Janet Buchwald (luckydog18@comcast.net).

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>.

COVID-19 Support Services From CJP:

If COVID-19 has affected someone you know financially, the CJP 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.

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:

www.jfcsboston.org/Volunteer/Volunteering-at-JF-CS 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 [Beth El's Tikkun Olam web page](#)