

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Virtual Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday February 11th, 2021 7:00pm

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

Welcome: Jim Billings

Good to see everyone again – thanks for continuing to show up!

Hebrew With Janet: N.C.H. It's a hit!

January meeting minutes: Jocylyn Bailin
Minutes approved unanimously

Rabbi's Report: Rabbi Breindel
Full report attached, no extra notes.
We continue to offer an amazing amount of programming!

Temple Administrator's Report: Beth Schine
*JEMS (Jewish Emergency Management System) security update: there was an incident a couple of weeks ago at a synagogue near Boston. 2 men came to the building and asked to come in. They appeared suspicious. They were not allowed in; security photos were sent to the Boston police and JEMS. Beth El has protocols in place for situations like this; we are confident that if something similar had happened at Beth El that the outcome would have been the same. The only ones in the building are Beth, Pam, and Carolyn, occasionally clergy. Beth, Pam and Carolyn all know what to do. We have an alarm system in place we have not yet activated it.

Q: why isn't it activated? What's the point of having it?

A: Agreed, Beth will check to see if it's connected with our fire alarm; will look into activating the system.

*One of our founding members, Nancy Gossels, has rejoined the congregation.

Education Report: Scott and Shoni

Scott:

BEInSpirED! Has been virtual for just about a year now. When Covid came in, our program was offline very briefly compared with other local institutions – after two weeks we were up and running again. Our main goal with the Ed community this year is to let our families know that we are there for them. The Sunday program starts earlier, and the programming is more streamlined and concise. This makes it easier for everyone. While there is definitely education happening, the focus has been more on community, continuity, and social interactions. Along those lines, some of our highlights include:

- The Hannukah bonfire/firepit drive-in
- The car Horah for the bat mitzvah,
- Tot shabbat online!

We have mailed holiday packages to each of our families on a regular basis. The next one is going out next week and includes materials and games and such related to Jewish themes and upcoming holidays. We are holding Family Shabbat 1x/month.

We continue to evaluate and reevaluate our program. There are so many unknowns that it makes forecasting difficult. We don't know if families are desperate for community or happy being solo. Will they still see the value of a religious education or not? We need to think of uncommon ways and places to recruit new families.

Shoni:

It's been a year. A challenging year to work with teens. Teens are very social. They have multiple commitments and different friend groups. They are exhausted and burned out from too much screen time. They don't always show up. Prior to Covid you could just arrange a time to hang out and then introduce the content, flexing with the group. Now the students are evaluating content before deciding whether or not to show up. Recent programming examples include:

- Photography class with Huggim (Haifa students)
- Prep for virtual Purim Carnival and shul-in

Additionally, Shoni is working on

- presenting at the Boston-Haifa annual steering conference. The future of HiBur is among the items of discussion
- Has applied for a \$12K grant from CJP to continue to develop the collaborative high school program
- Working to develop Covid-safe in-person learning modules for the J-Loft program

- Shoni's "gift" to Lore: saying "yes" to anything she asks him to do, so he is doing a lot more of the more complicated Zoom hosting. (Shabbat Rinah, Purim Spiel, community seder, etc.).
- Working with Scott on continuing to try and build a collaborative regional middle school education program.

Lorel Transition: Jim Billings reporting

A letter was sent to the community last week outlining the plan for the remainder of 2021-2022 after Lorel leaves. We will be bringing in guest clergy at least once a month to co-lead services. Our cadre of lay leaders will fill in on the other Shabbatot. We have identified lay leaders who can lead us in the festival services as well.

Q: What is the purpose of the guest clergy?

A: Hopefully these folks will bring a diversity of styles, demeanor, and approaches to worship.

Having a variety of leaders will help the congregation be more prepared for new leadership. We will explore what it's like to have a different kind of Shabbat experience.

Our lay leaders have been trained by Lorel and as such are very Lorel-like; guests will bring diversity and fresh ideas

If we want to be innovative we need to explore what's out there

Q: What will the feedback mechanism be?

A: we are figuring this out. We want to develop a protocol or a tool for anonymous collection of feedback on each guest. This enables and empowers the congregation to be part of the process.

Q: Are we looking to hire any of these guest leaders?

A: None of them will be candidates for the job.

Jim: I am looking for volunteers to put together a calendar of guest service leaders. We need to have a clear calendar/schedule of who is leading and when.

Committee Chairpersons Collaboration: Jim

Fundamentally we have a communications challenge within Beth El. We have all these wonderful, active committees that chug along putting together terrific programming. However, each group is functioning as a silo. As such they are unaware of what each other are doing. This makes collaboration very difficult and can make for a scheduling challenges as events cluster or even overlap.

Therefore, Jim is asking that there be a **monthly committee chair collaborative meeting**. At this meeting each group will share updates and plan schedules. VP's,

please reach out to your committee chairs ASAP and get this set up. Jim will send a follow-up on this request to all VP's

Tikkun Olam Report: Michelle Fineblum

Report attached.

The anti-racism group is highly active and hard working. They are asking “How can Beth El become an anti-racist congregation”? They are having this conversation not only with members of the congregation but with lay leadership and staff as well. To that end, the committee is scheduling a meeting with the Board, set for March 16th, 2021. The program will last for 2 hours and will include educational programming, breakout groups, and more. There will be a bit of homework to do before the meeting as well. Information will be sent out to the Board shortly.

Covid Task Force Update: Judy, Jim, Cynthia

The good, the bad, the future!

Good: Vaccines are rolling out! The 7-day positivity rate is just under 5%

Bad: It will be a while before everyone is vaccinated. The 7-day positivity rate should be under 3%.

The committee is starting to relax some of our guidelines. For example, we have recently allowed in-person pickups from Beth El, understanding that they would be no-contact and outdoors. At the same time, we need to remain vigilant. The new variants out there are more contagious, and most folks are not vaccinated.

Q: Has the committee started to think about what “success” will look like? We are not going to be perfectly safe from Covid for a number of years, how and when will we decide that it is safe to re-open?

A: The committee constantly looks 10 weeks out. We don't look further than that. We also continue to follow the research. For example, we don't yet know whether vaccinated people can still be vectors for infection. And Beth El behaviors are not grocery store behaviors – we sing, we dance, we hug, we kiss. We need to continue to factor all of that into our considerations.

Fundraising: Judy Goldberg

Pick a Project and Pay is up and running! Over 40 congregants have projects and are looking for sponsors! Go to the website, check it out, and sponsor folks or even sign up to do something! It's all online. It's all fun!

Executive Session invoked 8:13pm

Meeting adjourned 9:03pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jocelyn Bailin

Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley

Rabbi's Report Dec-Jan

Ritual

- **Community Chanukah initiative** – lovely experience, especially the full community gathering at which I MC'ed.
 - Will be working with Lorel on community Shavuot planning
- **Joined with Scott** for parking-lot Chanukah candle-lighting for the school.
- **Officiated at funeral for Lydia Hughes.** Jim and I reflected deeply together; decided to treat as a member event.
- Celebrated **bat mitzvah ceremony for Bea Pestka** and her family!
- Lorel and I offered a **post-inauguration ceremony of blessing** last night.

Lifecycle/Pastoral

- **Pastoral support** remains a major need (none directly connected to COVID).

Community outreach/events

- **Sudbury interfaith MLK** event – 115 participants! A LOT of work. Thanks to Lisa, Nicci and Rachel G. Conversation with interfaith group about future programs.
- **Chanukah for tots at Goodnow Library** was cancelled – we're trying for Passover.
- Will present for the **Islamic Center of Boston (Wayland)** for their book group on Sunday, 2/7 on a Jewish perspective on "forgiveness" with Fr. Carl Chudy and Shaheen Akhtar.

Programming and education

- **Creating a Tu Bi-Shevat** self-guided experience (source-sheet only, following COVID Committee recommendations) for next week.
- Helping to craft and plan to participate in both **J-LOFT (high school) and middle school Tu Bi-Shevat** programs.

Administrative

- **Gabba'im** will offer monthly divrei Torah through the spring: share more voices!
- **Visioning team** held first meeting; working closely with Jim and LIT.
- **Was accepted to Clergy Leadership Incubator (CLI) cohort!**
- Working closely with Jim, leadership and several committees on Lorel transition.

Personal

- Will take **vacation time** to correspond to my children's February break (2/14-18). Will not affect Shabbat.

Tikkun Olam update – January 2021

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, our fellow congregants are rising to the occasion to perform acts of Tikkun Olam – to repair the world – now more than ever. Please email tikkunolam@bethelsudbury.org if I've missed anything or if you'd like more information.

- **Green Team:** The Green Team is helping members reduce our collective carbon emissions. With the New Year comes new climate learning and action opportunities.

On February 2nd, the Green Team hosts a webinar on composting with Black Earth Compost.

February 17th will see a Green Team webinar on Greening Your Home Heating & Cooling for Your Home.

If you've not already done so, you can create your own MassEnergize account and list your household climate actions. Click here to sign up: <https://community.massenergize.org/JCAN>

Jerry Kazin, Beth El's VP/Tsibur, advises that the temple attic insulation and air infiltration project is almost done. This will reduce our energy operating costs and improve comfort at no cost to the Congregation.

Want to attend a webinar? Have questions on possible actions you can take to reduce your energy use and carbon footprint? Contact John Harper, jpharper47@gmail.com.

- **Anti-Racism Working Group:** The Antiracism Working Group presented the video "Breaking the Antisemitism Cycle Through Solidarity" with Dove Kent, followed by a discussion of the relationship between racism and antisemitism.

Beth El co-sponsored an interfaith Martin Luther King Day event and will co-sponsor other upcoming events, including a facilitated film discussion at Lincoln-Sudbury High School titled "I'm Not a Racist, Am I?"

The next antiracism book group meeting is on January 24. Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates will be discussed.

Working Group leadership has been meeting with other congregations to explore models of congregational antiracism work. Contacts: Judy Goldberg and Karen Blumenfeld

- **Sanctuary Committee:** We continue work in multiple areas:

We are trying to take stock of exactly where we are financially with respect to the Ayalas. They are more self-sufficient now than they were even a few months ago, but they still do need support in various areas. In conjunction with HIAS, we will be hosting a "Refugee Shabbat" at Beth El. We are trying to work out the logistics of it as we speak. Many more details to come. We would very much like to have it at the end of Pesach.

We organized a celebratory Stand-Out in Sudbury Center on the morning of January 20, Inauguration Day, to mark this moment before moving forward with more work to be done.

For more information on the Ayala family, contact Judy Katz (judy16k@gmail.com) or Judy Sletzinger (jsletzinger@gmail.com).

For details on legislative action, contact Kath Bean (kathleencbean@gmail.com).

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

• **Support for Beth El members:** Winter is upon us and Covid-19 has us firmly in its grasp. Some of us are sheltering in place with family, trying to be parents and teachers and athletic directors as well as work, while others are alone in our homes with nobody to talk to and no one to give us a hug. No matter what your situation is, these are trying and stressful times for everyone. This is a time for our community to step up and take care of one another.

There are currently two community support initiatives underway:

1. **Phone Buddies** make weekly or bi-monthly calls to other congregants. Anyone can do this, no matter how young or old (or in-between) you are! If you would like to make calls, let us know. If you would like to receive calls and/or would like to refer someone else to be a recipient of calls, let us know that too. Please contact Carol Sheingold at 617-943-3977 or csheingold@gmail.com.

2. **Soup Group!** Formerly called the Share Warmth and Love Brigade, this group of congregants make and deliver soup to other community members. To date we have made multiple soup deliveries to four recipients, and a fifth recipient will be getting soup starting this weekend! The soups have received rave reviews, nourishing both body and soul. As a reminder, soup can be delivered for serious needs like illness or being homebound, soup can also be sent to someone feeling lonely, cold, or just having a tough week. We can deliver even just because you feel like having a warm soupy hug! If you would like to volunteer to make soup and have not yet done so, please let us know! If you would like to request soup or nominate someone else to receive soup don't hesitate to reach out! Please contact Jocelyn Bailin at pi_joy@yahoo.com.

• **Help for Congregants Who Need Food Assistance:** If there are any congregants who could use some food assistance, they 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, they should contact Neighborhood Brigade (with whom Deborah has partnered). If they live in Lincoln or Sudbury they should contact Sudbury Neighborhood Brigade about home deliveries, at Sudbury MA Neighbor Brigade .

• **Tzedek Scholarship Fund:** The Tzedek Scholarship Fund is truly grateful to all the generous donors at Beth El who continue to support our work. We're continuing to support our three Framingham State scholars, who are managing well adapting to the new realities of education in the time of Corona. Below are short statements from two of our Tzedek scholars, both of whom will soon graduate Framingham State University. My goal for this Spring semester is to earn Deans List as I conclude my undergraduate education. Learning during the pandemic has been challenging but I have continued to succeed and made President's and Dean's list for the Fall semester. At this time, I'm applying for Framingham State University HR graduate program. Thank you for your support. Sincerely, Sashell Thebaud

My goals when graduating is to start an after-school program to help children have a vision and mission for their life at an early age, by teaching real life technique. Children will explore all jobs, and how life works. I want to thank those who had contributed to helping someone like me be able to graduate May 2021. It has been a dream of mine to attend college and this dream wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for people like you. Thank you for your kindness. May God bless you and your future. ---Rayanne Silva

• **Criminal Justice Reform:** Criminal Justice Reform, in conjunction with the Anti-Racism Interest group, has begun work on a project to publicize and, if possible, aid in the establishment of more Restorative Justice Circles. There is a group in Concord which is already doing this but has not been able to connect to poorer communities. We are reaching out to the former for advice, which communities are already involved, etc. We are considering Framingham, Hudson, Maynard and Marlborough. For more info, contact Elaine Barnartt-Goldstein at ebarnarttgoldstein@gmail.com.

• **Tzedaka Hevra:** The Tzedaka Hevra has had a very busy and productive year, giving away roughly \$30,000. 60% went to 3 organizations and the remaining 40% to 27 other organizations. We also made an emergency Covid donation of \$1000 that we split between Yad Chesed and Rabbi Breindel's discretionary fund. We heard from speakers representing organizations that we donate to, or that we may donate to. The Hevra meets regularly and is open to any Beth El member. To learn more, contact Ira Silver:

isilver@framingham.edu

• **MetroWest Free Medical Program:** The MWFMP is “seeing” patients remotely through a combination of video calls, phone conversations, and text messaging. We’re limited right now to patients we’ve seen before and hope to extend our services to new patients at in the future when we have more infrastructure in place to support telemedicine. We’ve received some emergency grants from funders that are helping to make the transition to telemedicine. We anticipate operating this way for the foreseeable future, into 2021. Visit their website to learn more and get involved.

• **Blood Drive:** Due to COVID, the blood drive has been postponed.

• **Kiddush donation opportunities:** In lieu of hosting Kiddush at the temple, consider joining a Beth El Kiddush group, which plans to donate funds to food pantries, including Sudbury Food Pantry, Greater Boston Food Bank and Feeding America.

• **Covid-19 volunteer opportunities:** Our community rises to the current Covid-19 challenge! Many Tikkun Olam efforts are already underway in support of Beth El members and the broader community. More opportunities arrive in our inboxes every day. The CJP, JCRC, Jewish Family & Children's Service, and others offer many opportunities. If you’re able to help, please take a look at their websites: <https://www.jfcsboston.org/About/COVID-19-Update> <https://www.jcrcboston.org/covid-19/> <https://www.cjp.org/get-involved>

• **COVID-19 Support Services From CJP:** If the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis 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.

CJP has launched the CJP Coronavirus Emergency Fund in order to extend greater support to numerous Jewish social service agencies providing critical services during this time. 100% of the money raised will help community members who are facing hardship as a result of this pandemic.

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.

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