

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Virtual Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday March 10th, 2022 7:30pm

In attendance: Andy Goldberg, Barbara Miller, Carolyn Schwartz, Cynthia Myersberg, Debbie Glass, Jerry Kazin, Jim Billings, Jocelyn Bailin, Josh Davidson, Judy Goldberg, Marla Lewitus, Michelle Fineblum, Neil Frieband, Sabina Pestka, Steve Probst, Steve Breit.
Staff: Beth Schine, Scott Newman, Shoni Aronovich, Rabbi Josh Breindel. **Guests:** Susan Tohn, Cat Kaner

Welcome: Jim Billings

Hebrew with Janet: Janet Buchwald
Zachor, to Remember, remembrance and remind. Of interesting note to this note-taker, a secretary is a mazkirah (same root).

February 10th and February 24th Meeting Minutes: Approved unanimously

Staff Reports

Rabbi's Report: Rabbi Breindel

Full report attached

Shoutout to the members and especially the leaders of the clergy search committee, who have been working incredibly hard, and, recently, incredibly overtime, to bring us these three final candidates. Rabbi made personal appeal to Board members, asking, even encouraging them to attend as many sessions with out candidtes as possible. In person best, but even online is fine. As leaders and representatives of our community it is important that the Board show up in times like these.

Education Reports: Scott Newman and Shoni Aronovich

Full reports attached

Committee Reports:

Tikkun Olam Report: Michelle Fineblum.

See full report attached

Talmud Torah Report: Barbara Miller

Full report attached

Ritual Committee: Carolyn Schwartz

Full report linked

Security Committee: Jim Billings

The security committee met for the first time last night. We will likely be extending the paid security detail through the next fiscal year. The group is researching all options and is reaching out and communicating with local, statewide and national resources. The report from our first weekend of security detail is terrific. The security guard was respectful, warm and kind to adults and youth alike, watchful, and overall very professional. RJB and Beth confirmed and further affirmed this.

Ritual Committee Presentation: Carolyn Schwartz

The Ritual Committee meets monthly, always on the third Thursday of the month. On average 12 people show up to each meeting. Over the past year the committee has worked to codify the practices for every holiday and Shabbat, creating a spreadsheet for each one with all the resources that are needed. The spreadsheet gets updated in real time of that holiday, so it's constantly fresh. Additionally, the RC has put together an art show, about to debut up in the Loft, designed around member's ritual objects and the stories they contain. Please drop by and see it! Other tasks undertaken this year: The transliteration of Limnot Yameinu, our Beth El shiva booklet, and the creation of a service booklet for Tish'a B'Av. Look for upcoming classes that are collaboration between the RC and Adult Ed!

Survey on Services at Beth El. Carolyn shared a subset of the data that was collected from the survey on Beth El religious services. Based on the data, there are some initiatives underway. For the month of May and June, Friday night services will start at 7:30 3x/month and at 6:00 once per month. The 6:00 services will be followed by a potluck once we return to eating indoors. Saturday morning services will be shortened as well – Rabbi Breindel reported that they are aiming for services to be no longer than 2:15. Anyone who would like to see the full data set from the survey is welcome to request it from Carolyn.

Virtual Hevra final presentation: Carolyn Schwartz.

Once again Carolyn outlined the details of the virtual hevra proposal and made an appeal: our members are slowly moving away. This Virtual Hevra allows them a way to remain connected to and receive support from our community. Many places are starting to consider this type of membership; let's be on the forefront of the movement. Carolyn stressed that nobody will be turned away from virtual participation, just as we do not turn people away from in-person participation.

Full presentation attached.

Q&A and discussion:

Q: We have an existing Friends of Beth El category. Why should we create yet another category?

A: Friends of Beth El allows for only two things: to remain on and participate in the email distribution and to remain in the directory. FoBE allows for people to not be disconnected. The Virtual Hevra (VH) offers more than that – it offers a way to remain actively connected. FoBE has also not been very successful – in the dozen or more years that we've had this category we have had only a handful of folks sign up.

Q: Will there be a point person or buddy system of some sort assigned to each VH member? Will you interview them to see how they want to be involved?

A: We are looking in to forming a committee to do this. Zoom allows us to be interactive in far more ways than previously and allows for much more participation

Q: How will virtual visitors be able to join us?

A: They will need to contact us directly and will receive a link. We will require them to give a name and an email in order to attend services. This is helpful for security reasons as well. If they continue to show up, we will eventually ask them to join the VH or at least make a donation to BE.

Discussion continued for about 20 minutes. After two votes failed to gain majority support an amendment was added to the motion that Beth El do a trial run of the Virtual Hevra membership category for the period of one year.

Motion:

Motion approved: In favor: 5. Opposed: 4. Abstain: 6

Presidential Succession: Jim Billings and Michelle Fineblum

Jim announced that he will be stepping down from the presidency at the conclusion of his second year, and that Michelle Fineblum has agreed to be our next congregational President. Michelle spoke briefly to confirm this and that her great love and deep appreciation for this community that she has called her home since 1985 brought her to accept the nomination with great joy.

Executive Session invoked: 8:45pm

Meeting adjourned: 9:30pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jocelyn Bailin

Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley

Attached Reports:

Rabbi

Education – Elementary and Middle/High

Tikkun Olam

Talmud Torah

Ritual Committee

Shabbat Services full survey results

Virtual Hevra

Rabbi's Report Feb-March 2022

Ritual

- Coordinated visit with our **fourth guest Shabbat leader, Cantor Louise Treitman**
- Coordinating visits with our **three clergy candidates** as well as our next guest, **Cantor Marcie Jonas** throughout March.
 - This is occupying a large part of my attention this month.
 - **Please make every effort to attend as much of our candidates' visits as possible.**
- Working with ritual committee and school to prepare for Purim.

Lifecycle/Pastoral

- **Congregational concern around Ukraine/Russia. Excitement around clergy search process.**

Community outreach/events

- **Coordinating MetroWest Shavuot celebration.**
- Connecting with Nixon School around multicultural initiatives.

Programming and education

- Coordinating with Scott and Shoni around candidate visits to the school.
- Coordinating new midrash writing class – likely end of March/early April.
- We held the first session of our **Jewish F&SF bookclub**. Next one 3/30.
- Please mark your calendars for **Siyyum Shabbat** (5/6).

Administrative

- Meeting with **new and prospective members**
- Coordinating with **professional staff** individually and collectively.

Personal/Professional Development

- Hoping to take some time off in April after we conclude this stage of the search process (and pre-Pesach).

Teen Education and Engagement Report

March 2022 - Shoni

High School

Our first sessions back in person was an exciting event for everyone, the the teens were delighted to spend some real time with their friends. We look forward to many more Mondays together.

Preparations for the Purim Carnival are in full gear!

Students are very interested in meeting the clergy candidates, and will attend/tune in to services over the next few weeks. Parent were invited to Meet and Greet with the candidates on Sunday morning.

With Siyyum just two months away, our four seniors are already in advance stages of the projects. We all look forward for the first in-person Siyyum since 2019.

Middle School

The first in-person sessions of the STOP program will take place a day before the board meeting.

During the two months of STOP, our middle schoolers receive 1:1 Hebrew lessons with Scott and myself.

The Middle Schoolers will be helping the older teens run this year's Purim Carnival. Next month we will be back at Or Atid for the JLCMW program.

J-LOFT

Spring Semester kicked off just before February break. We currently offer 3 different tracks, two of them taught by Rabbi Breindel and myself. Applying for another Teen Impact grant from CJP for next year.

In communication with additional local temples about growing the J-LOFT partnership (most recently met with TI of Natick).

Plans are already being put in place for next year, including HiBuR returning, a service trip to Louisiana, as well as hosting the next MLK Day of Service.



Education Director Board Report March 2022

- I. We are back in person!
 1. Although masking is lifting locally, we are staying masked for at least a couple more weeks.
 - i. Medically prudent to wait 2-3 weeks after the break, since folks were traveling etc.
 - ii. We still have kids who cannot be vaccinated in the building.
 2. We are still using mostly larger rooms with more air flow, and opening window in the rooms that are small.
 - II. 'Hebrew rehab' following COVID is in full swing
 1. Taking a student by student approach at bringing everyone up to a couple of standard Hebrew levels.
 2. Scott, Rachel Kornreich, and Harry Abrahams have all been seeing kids 1:1 during the week.
 3. 1:1 is very effective and we are using metrics to be sure that progress is taking place.
 4. This will inform Hebrew staffing and levels for the coming year
 - 5.
 - III. Purim, March 13 Purim will look a bit like 2 years ago before we experienced the pandemic. There will be an abbreviated class, followed by family activity and carnival, COVID safe. We will use the successful format used in past: Classes, Family program with spiel, followed by Carnival. a. Teachers will lead the Spiel
- IV. Passover Family Program – April 10
- a. Interactive family learning round-robin stations:
 - i. symbols of seder plate
 - ii. sections of the seder
 - iii. 4 Questions:
 - iv. Guess who I am. (characters from the story of Passover)
 - v. 4 Sons (children): first example of differentiated learners
 - vi. The Story of Passover
- V. Clergy Candidate Meetings
1. This Sunday, we will meet the first of 3 candidates. Candidate coming this week is Batya Ellinoy – a student at Hebrew College who will be ordained as a Rabbi this year.
 2. We arranged for her to be with us for the entire morning last Sunday. Scott designed a schedule where he taught in each class, had time to talk with parents, and did some leading of 'Kehila', our morning gathering with Rabbi Josh and Scott. Parents and students had a chance to give feedback. Parents used an online form. Students will be observed for engagement and asked a few key questions about the candidate. Parents of PK-12 were invited to the half hour session
- VI. Good and Welfare

Thank you to the Board of Directors for our continued relationship. It has been expressed to me that there is (mutual) intent to move forward with provisions for a two-year contract. I remain excited to continue my work with the Beth El community and offer my gratitude for the honor.

-Respectfully submitted: Scott Newman, Director, Youth and Family Education

Tikkun Olam Update – March 2022

Our fellow members are engaged in Tikkun Olam on many levels and in many ways. Join us in being inspired, and consider joining in! 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!*

Afghan Gift Card Drive

Thank you, generous community! In a little over 2 weeks, Beth El members donated over \$1800 for gift cards for Afghan refugee families settling in MetroWest. Jewish Family Services of Metrowest will distribute the gift cards to the families. We conducted the drive in collaboration with Temple Israel of Natick, Hartford Street Presbyterian Church and Ma'yan Tikvah. Thank you to Allison Alter for stepping up to coordinate Beth El's effort!

Inclusion Committee:

- **JDAIM:** February was Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month. For JDAIM, the committee posted the JDAIM Resource Guide (webinars, books, films and organizations) and presented a series of events. The committee recommended books about Disability and Inclusion for adults and children to be purchased for the Beth El library. Throughout the month, personal prayers, music, and d'vars were presented about disability and inclusion at some of the Friday and Saturday night services.
- **Library:** The inclusion committee has helped to choose the **following additions to the library:**
 - 2 Adult books
 - Running Naked in the Snow (poetry) A collection of poetic works about inclusion, and specifically valuing and supporting individuals with Autism.
 - From Longing to Belonging: A Practical Guide to Including People with Disabilities and Mental Health Conditions in Your Faith Community A comprehensive guide based on new and innovative ideas.
 - 3 Children's books:
 - Just Eliot Book about a six year old boy with Autism and his everyday challenges in life and how he copes. T
 - The Mitten String A modern Jewish Folktale about a girl who responds to someone else with physical differences.
 - We Can Find a Way An inclusion story, based on Hachnosas Orchim, or the act of welcoming others.
- **Gender neutral restrooms:**
- Our gender neutral restroom committee is co-chaired by Susan Tohn she/hers and R Feynman they/them. R made a presentation to the board this month, and the committee led two sessions for congregants so far, with presentations and discussions in breakout rooms. (A total of 42 people have attended.) We will have one more of those sessions and congregants are encouraged to attend to ask questions, to learn and to contribute to discussions. By the end of March, the gender neutral restroom committee will make a recommendation to the board, which they will review at the April board meeting in time to include any financial decisions in the capital budget.
- For more information about the Inclusion Committee, contact Susan Tohn.

Green Team: This month:

- What's a heat pump?

Answer #1 – they pump heat in during the cold days, and pump heat out during the hot days. Answer #2 – you already have one – it’s your refrigerator.

Missed our Greening Your Home Heating & Cooling webinar? See the recording [HERE](#).

- If you live in Wayland, at last year’s Town Meeting you declared a Climate Emergency and mandated creating a climate action plan. A first draft now is available – check it out [HERE](#). Then, take this survey to tell Wayland what’s missing, what’s great, or what’s frankly confusing!
Pop quiz: What percentage of Wayland’s total greenhouse gas emissions come from homes and personal vehicles? 40%? 60%? 80%? Join Wayland’s climate forums on 3/29 and 4/13 to get the answer!
- Do you live in Sudbury? If so, have you signed up for clean green electricity? Check out Sudbury’s community electricity aggregation, and choose Sudbury Class 1 Green! It’s so easy. Right now, it’s cheaper than getting your electricity from Eversource (really). Not sure what all this means? Watch the recording of our January webinar on Greening your Home Electricity [HERE](#), read the presentations [HERE](#), and contact Barry Sheingold if you’ve questions.
- Your legislature is considering more climate legislation. Want to learn more? Shirley Hui reports that MetroWest Climate Solutions will host an info session on March 15 at 7 p.m. It will feature Rep. Jeffrey Roy, the House Chair of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy at the State House. Rep. Alice Peisch will moderate the discussion. Register at tinyurl.com/MAClimateLawHouse.
- Are you considering an EV for your next car? Wondering how to shop for one? Check out the Green Energy Consumer Alliance EV shopping tool [HERE](#). Maybe a used EV is in your future? Then, learn more [HERE](#).
- Check out climate actions you can take on the MassEnergize/JCAN platform –See what your fellow Beth Elers already are doing and join them! <https://community.massenergize.org/JCAN>
- Sign up for the GreenTeam list-serv by emailing greenteam-subscribe@members.bethelsudbury.org
- Which climate actions make the biggest difference? Interested, but time limited? Contact John Harper at jpharper47@gmail.com to connect with a Green Team member who can help you.

Sanctuary Committee:

Members of the Sanctuary Committee were active in the organization of the recent stand-out in Sudbury Center in opposition to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It was well-attended and received good attention in MetroWest Daily News.

The focus of the Sanctuary Committee is shifting to state and national concerns, focusing on the massive increase in refugees needing our support -- those from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and the continuing large number of people fleeing for their lives from organized criminals and murderers in Central America.

This is a fraught time, to be sure.

We will be hosting a meeting at Beth El on Sunday, May 15 from 11-3 PM to help our members become active in action for these refugees. We’re currently in the process of planning for this. (We’re having a committee meeting this coming Thursday, for instance, to start fleshing it out.) We plan to do this in consultation with HIAS which is and has been a beacon in this area for a long time now. There will be a lot more information to come.

For info on legislative action, contact Kath Bean (kathleenbean@gmail.com). For info on the Ayala family, contact Judy Katz (judy16k@gmail.com) or Judy Sletzinger (jsletzinger@gmail.com). For info on Friday afternoon stand-outs or other Sanctuary Committee activities, contact Carl Offner (carl.offner@comcast.net).

The Antisemitism Task Force

We were happy to welcome new members to the Task Force this month. We're excited about our work designing a community-based program, as part of Beth El's participation in ADL/URJ's *Act Against Antisemitism Project*, a new synagogue-based initiative for 2022. We also learned about the Genocide Education bill passed at the state level and discussed potential relevance for our future efforts. Please email tikkunolambethel@gmail.com for more info or let us know you're interested.

Antiracism Working Group:

- The Antiracism Working Group organized a discussion of the Whoopi Goldberg controversy, using this article and this two-minute video as a springboard for conversation. Several of us wrote this piece on the controversy: [Unpacking the Whoopi Goldberg Controversy](#).
- Following the Board of Directors' endorsement of an antiracism Resolution, leaders of the Antiracism Working Group have begun to work with board members, staff and clergy to begin implementing the resolution.
- Group contacts: Judy Goldberg and Karen Blumenfeld (antiracism@BethEISudbury.org)

Tzedaka Hevra:

This month, we selected [Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action](#) to receive 20% of our funds for this year, and the next two years. We heard from two different organizations and went through a thoughtful, values-based discussion which led to this group decision. At our April meeting, we'll hear about, and vote on, the groups that receive smaller amounts.

Are you 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:

We are proud of our current scholar, Laura Jaime Lopez. Laura plans to graduate in May with a BA in Criminology, a concrete step in her plan to become a Latina police officer. The Committee is preparing to review applications for Fall scholarship recipients. For info: Janet Buchwald (luckydog18@comcast.net).

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 Carol Sheingold or Jocylyn Bailin. If you'd like to volunteer to be part of the support network, please contact either of these two folks as well!

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 Sudbury resident needs assistance in getting pantry groceries delivered to them at home, that too can be arranged.

MetroWest Free Medical Program:

We are grateful to have secured space to see patients for Adult Medicine & Women's Health at the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center in Framingham. We are indebted to all our volunteers, many whom are Beth El members! The program website is at this link. For more information, contact Beth El member Gary Hirsch.

Blood Drive:

We had to cancel the 1/11 blood drive due to COVID. We're hoping to reschedule as soon as it is safe to do so. Any questions, please contact Jordan Oshlag at JordanOshlag@gmail.com.

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,

MichelleFineblum,VP,TikkunOlam tikkunolambethel@gmail.com BethEl'sTikkunOlamwebpage

Talmud Torah/Adult Education March 3, 2022

We have had, and plan to have more meaningful, interesting, fun, informative programs this year and in the future. We would love sharing them inside of our community and welcoming others from beyond our community. Please support having additional help to get the word out, about all we do here, and make Beth El visible again in the greater community.

The Jewish Fantasy and Sci-Fi Book Club

We would like this to be a featured program with participation within the community as well as beyond the community. Please spread the word!

Our Sci-Fi Rabbi and Librarian Stephanie Bennett held the first session of this book group on February 23. Discussion with 25 participants was facilitated in the larger group and in breakout groups. Someone who found it on social media also participated! Even friends from Ohio! Next up is **Spinning Silver by Naomi Novick, to be discussed on Weds March 30, 8p.m.** Each month, they'll offer a new title to read, and join together to explore its themes and perspectives on Jewish life and culture. All are warmly welcome on this wondrous journey! Meetings are usually held on the last Wednesday of the month at 8 p.m. (unless pre-empted by a holiday). **Future dates April 20, May 25.**

New Offering, along with Ritual Committee TBA

Led by Rabbi Breindel and 4th Year HC Rabbinical Student Lisa Feld Midrash class includes both reading and writing Midrash

They are planning sessions, with the goals of

- Learning classic midrashim on the theme of suppressed voices (often women) and "othering" (often surrounding tribes)
- Composing original midrashim that give voice to those who have traditionally been underserved in our tradition

Participants would be invited to share their midrashim with the community as a whole (perhaps part of a Lichora initiative or in services as a d'var).

Saturday March 12: High Spirits at Beth El: Online pre-Purim Scotch and spirits tasting.

Get in the mood for Purim with an online single-malt whisky and spirits tasting and Beth El fundraiser. We'll taste a variety of whiskeys from around the world as well as two other spirits, carefully chosen to complement the whisky. Once again the tasting will be facilitated by Raj Sabharwal, a certified Whisky Ambassador. Raj is a wonderful host. **There are still a few more tasting kits available.** (This is a fun, social, community event, even if you don't have the tasting kit.) And don't forget it is a fundraiser for Beth El.

Beginning Hebrew

Janet has agreed to hold a beginner class if interest is there

We will contact Scott and inquire of the community. We would need at least 4 students

Jewish Lives Book Club TBA: Late April, May, June

We will continue with the **Jewish Lives Book Club series From Yale University Press Hank Greenberg:**

The Hero Who Didn't Want to Be

Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice

Einstein: His Space and Times

Anita Diamant May TBA

We will welcome Anita in discussion about her latest book

Period. End of Sentence A New Chapter in the Fight for Menstrual Justice

Additional Spring Program Considerations

Inviting a panel of young Jews from outside of Beth El to share how they experience Jewish life. Inviting a panel of young Beth El Alums to share how they experience Jewish life.

A session or short series on Retirement, as another wave of congregants joins this lifestyle. More ideas to be finalized or discussed at our next Adult Ed Meeting later this month.

Behind the scenes

-I put in a lot of time toward making connections and learning processes for publicizing our events. It's been hit or miss, and not exactly timely, but there has been some forward motion—barely noticeable at first, but should work better in the future. Beth helped with sharing procedures. I made a few connections. Since this is an issue for Beth El as an organization, we do need to have someone who can take it on, and make it happen. This is something we can do that offers a very favorable ROI and relieves stress and frustration from committee volunteers.

-I will work on some process docs for future program planning, both per event and for mapping seasons and years of programming.

Thank you for your support and don't forget to take advantage of programs, and to encourage others inside and outside of Beth El to join us.

Barbara Miller
VP Talmud Torah/Adult Education

The following reports are linked as they are in a format that I am unable to include with this report. They have been emailed (and are available for email) separately.

Finance Report:

Virtual Hevra Presentation:

Ritual Presentation and Shabbat Services Survey Results: