

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Virtual Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday April 28th, 2022 7:30pm

In attendance: Andy Goldberg, Ann Barysh, Barbara Miller, Carolyn Schwartz, Cynthia Myersberg, Debbie Glass, Jerry Kazin, Jim Billings, Jocylyn Bailin, Judy Goldberg, Marla Lewitus, Michelle Fineblum, Neil Frieband, Sabina Pestka, Steve Probst **Staff:** Scott Newman, Shoni Aronovich, Rabbi Josh Breindel. **Guests:** David Waldman, Gail Kazin, Gena Blinderman, Gillian Decker, Judith Lytel, Judy Gross, Kath Bean, Liz David, Lizza Sandoe, Martin Brauer, Mayrav Feynman, Paul Rosenbaum, R. Feynman, Roger Watnick, Susan Philips, Susan Tohn

Welcome: Jim Billings

Hebrew with Janet: Janet Buchwald: K'doshim

Ti'kaleil – to belittle or to take someone lightly

(k) halelujah to praise

Change one letter and we change a word, and we change the world!

Minutes from March 10 – Jocylyn Bailin

Minutes unanimously approved

Operating Budget: Steve Probst

Powerpoint presentation. If you would like a copy, ask Steve for it.

- FC starts with current budget + YTD current revenues and expenses + input from lay leaders and staff = forecast for current revenue and expenses.
- Forecast for current revenue and expenses + forecast for environmental changes + policy assumptions = draft budget for next year
- Draft budget for next year + input from congregation + Board decisions = Final Budget

Basics:

Current overall revenues higher than expected, through a combination of better than anticipated fundraising (Lorel retirement) and dues collection (past years' arrears and present year).

School revenues lower than expected

Security costs and pulpit costs (visiting cantors) higher than expected.

We will be using 45k of funds to balance our budget; we had anticipated using 95k.

Draft budget for next year assumes a worse financial situation:

- Less fundraising
- Increased expenses as we return to the building and once again require maintenance, electricity, and supplies

- Security costs (will add 35k)
- Marketing consultant
- Higher education costs (supplies and maintenance for being back in building)
- COLA increases (draft budget assumes 4% increase)
- Assumes net membership loss of 8 families (this is recent average)
- Assumes \$100 increase in dues per family

Policy decisions:

- COLA – How much do we want to give? Draft assumes 4% raise for COLA. Inflation is currently twice that; the government is giving 6%.
- Security: Do we want to add a \$150 security fee to each membership? This would essentially cover our security costs; many congregations have implemented this.
- Marketing consultant: This is a strategic investment, we are looking to hire a part time marketing consultant to help us message and attract new members. Since this is a strategic investment it could come from allocations or it could be in the budget.
- Interim clergy: Draft budget assumes 80k for an interim clergy member. No idea if this is a realistic number or not. Will get a better number as the process continues.

Congregational budget forum will be May 5th instead of May 3rd (due to shiva). Next FC meeting will be held May 10th instead of May 5th.

Beth El Combatting Antisemitism Task Force – Michelle Fineblum and Paul Rosenbaum
Powerpoint presentation emailed directly to the Board members.

The Combatting Antisemitism Task Force recommends that Beth El adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

Discussion:

- Request to consider adopting the Jerusalem definition of antisemitism instead of or in addition to the IHRA definition. This was debated.
- IHRA definition is much more widely accepted; it makes sense to sign on to this one; it's not perfect but it's good. The Jerusalem Declaration is supported by individuals; the IHRA is supported by major institutions all over.
- The town of Sudbury is looking to adopt the IHRA definition at the upcoming Town Meeting; they would love to have us on as supporters. Other synagogues and organizations are also eager to partner with us on this definition.

Motion: *The Board of Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley accepts the definition and endorses the IHRA definition of antisemitism on behalf of Congregation Beth El.*

Motion approved: *In favor: 14. Abstention: 1*

Gender Neutral Bathroom Committee – R. Feynman, Mayrav Feynman, Jerry Kazin

The Gender Neutral Bathroom Committee since its last visit to the Board held 4 community meetings and sent out a congregational survey. Here are some of the results:

90 surveys were returned:

Of those the vast majority (78) agreed that it is important to have a gender-neutral bathroom space at Beth El.

The data on the importance of having gendered bathrooms available was mixed, with 34 in agreement, 25 neutral and 28 disagreeing

The majority agreed that it is important to have increased privacy in the bathrooms (49 agree, 27 neutral, 10 disagree)

Four community meetings were held:

18 spoke in favor of creating a gender-neutral bathroom space

7 people spoke of wanting increased privacy with floor to ceiling walls between stalls

8 spoke in favor of keeping all bathrooms in their current space

8 spoke with concerns about wanting to be sure that Beth El retains some gendered bathrooms. They spoke strongly about needing a safe and private space; this is especially important to those who have been victims of sexual violence.

Overall there is a clear desire for at least one single user bathroom at Beth El, not only for our transgender and nonbinary community members, but also for those who may need assistance in the bathroom.

David Waldman presented a letter, signed by 17 congregants, objecting to making all bathrooms at Beth El gender-neutral and in support of one specific design and location.

The GNBC itself is making no specific recommendations to the Board as to which design option to choose. They are presenting the Board with a motion, as follows:

Motion: *Congregation Beth El will commit to creating a gender-neutral bathroom space at Beth El by September 2023*

Motion approved: *In favor: 14*

Opposed: 1. noted that the opposition is not to the proposal itself (the person is in favor of a gender-neutral bathroom space) but to the lack of a specific plan

Bathroom Redesign Presentation: Jerry Kazin

Jerry Kazin presented four different options for remaking our current bathrooms (the fifth option was to do nothing).

- 1) Make all bathrooms gender neutral and modify them with additional privacy elements. This is the least intrusive and least expensive option.
- 2) Create an ADA compliant single-user bathroom in the existing space. As a result, the existing mens' and womens' bathrooms would become smaller.
- 3) Convert the existing bathroom space into three ADA compliant single-user bathrooms.
- 4) Convert the existing Cantor office into an ADA compliant single-user bathroom and create new Cantor office space out of the existing Classroom 5.

Discussion:

- Any changes must meet MA and ADA regulations.
- It was noted that proposals #2 and #3 are non-compliant with Massachusetts laws as the requirement is when converting bathrooms you cannot reduce the overall number of available bathroom stalls.
- We have checked our plumbing and leach field and none of the proposed changes would create issues or cause us to be out of compliance with our current system
- The school community is not in favor of losing a classroom. It has been used in the past as both for tutoring and as a classroom and they are very hopeful that it can be used again as a classroom – we intend to grow our school.
- We do not yet have pricing quotes for any of these options. There is no vote expected to be taken tonight; this presentation is informational only.

Executive Session invoked: 9:52 pm

Meeting Adjourned: 10:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jocelyn Bailin

Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley

Attached Reports:

Rabbi

Education

Tikkun Olam

Temple Admin

Talmud Torah

Please note that the ritual report was sent out ahead of the meeting due to formatting issues it could not be included here.

Rabbi's Report March-April 2022

Ritual

- Coordinated visits with our **three clergy candidates** as well as our guest, **Cantor Jonas** throughout March.
- Partnered with Aimee and Mitch for **Purim** megillah reading/morning services.
- Coordinated with Aimee for **Passover festival morning** as well as concluding **Yizkor/festival** services.
- Mark calendars:
 - Celebrating with Bernie and Linda as call their grandson Louis to Torah for the first time on 5/7.
 - Rohan Green-Vaswani will be called to Torah as our community's newest bar mitzvah on 5/14.

Lifecycle/Pastoral

- **Congregational concern around Ukraine/Russia.**
- **Anxiety and tension around clergy candidate choices.**
- Researched **gender-neutral terms for bar/bat mitzvah ceremony** for non-gender conforming students.

Community outreach/events

- **Coordinating MetroWest Shavuot celebration.**
- Connecting Sudbury houses of worship with our **anti-Semitism team.**
- Met with **Inclusion team and Ruderman Foundation** rep following JDAIM.
- Led March instance of the **MetroWest Jewish healing circle.**
- Participating in **MetroWest Yom ha-Shoah observance** on Wed. 4/27.
- Visited **Goodnow library** with Scott for Pesach outreach event.

Programming and education

- Held second session of our **Jewish F&SF bookclub** in March and third in April.
- Participated in BE-InSpirEd **Passover family event.**
- Offered **Pesach through Hasidic Tales** one-shot on 4/21.
- Please mark your calendars for **Siyyum Shabbat** (5/13).

- Participated in our lovely **holy objects art installation** – yashar koach to Carolyn!

Administrative

- **Search process** and follow-up with the committee and leadership. **The search was my major project throughout the past month.**
- Meeting with **new and prospective members:**
 - Been working with **Jake Tovicsin** towards conversion; he'll immerse at Mayyim Hayym next month and get married shortly thereafter. He and Stephanie are in process of joining Beth El. Coming for aufruf 5/21.
 - Spoke with **Jason Kleinerman** and Lexie around infant immersion for his son; will keep membership in the loop.

April, 2022 Administrator's Report

(Please note: **Any items highlighted in yellow** involve a request/reminder of some sort from me about desired action on the part of the Board or membership)

Brief update on numbers:

- Membership stands at 232, with one new member household since the last report – Kayla Resnicov, who came in through the collaborative middle school, joining Beth El in large part because her son wants to become bar mitzvah. There are a couple of families expressing interest, with whom Scott is in contact.
- Dues collection as of 4/14 was \$456,000. My estimate (with a high degree of certainty) of outstanding dues that will be collected is \$50 - \$55K. More is possible, but with less certainty.

Recent building and related matters:

- Computer issues, including identifying possible source of dropping wifi signal on a couple of occasions recently.
- It's inspection season – inspections on the following are either scheduled or have recently been completed:
 - Building inspection by town of Sudbury
 - Fire alarm
 - Kitchen fire suppression system
 - Wastewater (septic holding tanks)

Recent/Ongoing/Current Activities/Projects:

Transfer from Chaverware to ShulCloud: Onboarding process is ongoing **Calendaring meeting** – email to set date for meeting is going out by end of day today (April 21) to VPs, committee chairs, staff who are key players in scheduling events, programs, activities, etc. for the year. If you received it, please respond to the poll ASAP. If you did not receive it, but would like to/feel you should be included, my apologies for the oversight – please email me and let me know.

Fobs are now working – education families have access during BE Inspired hours. Default for everyone will allow access when the building is officially open for business or services, i.e. 9-5 Mon/Wed/Thurs; 9-3 Tuesday; 9-12noon on Friday.

Fobs: A reminder to you, and please spread the word:

- Remember to have your fobs with you when you come to Beth El.
- If you never received one, be in touch with me about getting one
- If you can't find your fob, let me know - ACT NOW, I'm offering a time-limited post-COVID replacement discount

Committees/members/groups with whom I'm involved or to whom I offer support

- **COVID task force**
- **Clergy search committee** - Worked with clergy search committee in last stages of process; candidates visits

- **Security Task Force** -Assisting in pulling together documentation of the work of past security committees, which includes past assessments and recommendations.
 - Did walk-through of building with Chief Nix
 - We are scheduled for an assessment on May 10th by the CJP Communal Security Initiative (who will be making a presentation to the Board at the special meeting scheduled for this coming Tuesday, April 26th). I have a pre-assessment Zoom call scheduled with them on April 27th as part of the preparation for that May 10th assessment.
- Providing reports, data to VPs and their Finance Committee “budget buddies” in the budget planning process (Primarily Ritual and Education, in addition to Tsibur)

I continue to be involved with the following on a regular basis:

- Working with members of committees who are planning events, providing support around creating emails, coordinating publicity schedule, Zoom hosting
- Responding to phone calls from members with questions about schedules, accessing video archives, Zoom links, billing
- Weekly meetings with rabbi, president, and staff
- Technology for Zoom/hybrid programs - Planning, setting up, testing in advance

Talmud Torah/Adult Education April 20, 2022

We have had, and plan to continue having meaningful, interesting, fun, informative programs this year and in the future. We love sharing them within our community and welcoming others from beyond our community. We will have additional help to get the word out in the future, about all we do here, and make Beth El visible again in the greater community. Bringing programs to our community during the pandemic was taken seriously by the Adult Ed Committee. We did our best to bring the community together with a wide variety of satisfying programs.

Recent Events

Saturday March 12: High Spirits at Beth El: Online pre-Purim Scotch and spirits tasting. Raj presented another wonderful event for our community. Arnie, again served as auctioneer. Thanks to Steve Balzac for organizing.

Sunday April 10, 7:00pm

Rabbi Pam Wax brought us a wonderful poetry program. She can offer a variety of programs, and is a good presenter, we had good feedback, so we may have her back in the future for a different type of program. She is based in both western MA, and Westchester County, NY Thanks to Marjorie Pechet for organizing

Anita Diamant Sunday May 1, 7:00pm

Live and on Zoom

We will welcome Anita in discussion about her latest book

Period. End of Sentence

A New Chapter in the Fight for Menstrual Justice

We will also make a donation of sanitary products contributed by attendees Thanks again to Marjorie Pechet for organizing

The Jewish Fantasy and Sci-Fi Book Club

Next up in May is **He, She and It, by Marge Piercy.**

Please join us and feel free to share with friends outside the community.

Our Sci-Fi Rabbi and Librarian Stephanie Bennett held the first three sessions of this book group on February 23, March 30, and April 20. Discussion with approx 25 participants was facilitated in the larger

Beginning Hebrew Will follow up to see if anyone is interested in a class before the Holidays.

Jewish Lives Book Club TBA: 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

Additional Spring Program Considerations

group and in breakout groups. They explore 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 preempted by a holiday). A participant found it on social media. Friends participated from Ohio!

Invite 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, Rabbi Wax may be a possibility. She has training in wise aging, etc.

More ideas to be finalized or discussed at our next Adult Ed Meeting.

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, when I do have time. Efforts aren't always as 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. Also, there are always unexpected issues to address in a timely manner that come up throughout the year.

Process Doc

I will work on more process docs for future program planning, both per event and for mapping seasons and years of programming. In addition to committee ideas, we receive suggestions which have resulted in good programs.

Marketing, PR, Outreach

Adult Ed and other committees will benefit from the contractor offering marketing support for our programs. We look forward to this. This will be more efficient, save time, and reduce stress.

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

Best,
Barbara Miller
VP Talmud Torah/Adult Education



I.

Youth and Family Education Board Report, April 2022

Looking back since last report:

1. **Great to be back in the building!** There is a wonderful buzz and excitement among our families and children.
2. **We had a Havdalah** and movie night that drew about 30 people combined kids and adults.

i. This was a test program to see if there would be interest.

1. Students stuck oranges in cloves and were invited to make a Havdalah candle for home use.
2. Instructional Havdalah led by Rabbi Josh with Scott on guitar
3. All were served a pasta dinner with salad
4. Movie: Prince of Egypt due to proximity of Passover.
5. Event was considered a success by all!

c. We had a Passover family learning program called "Escape From Egypt"

- i. Was a round-robin program with stations led by our faculty
- ii. Families traveled around with their child's age-cohort to gain a puzzle piece at each station, that when put together, assembled a key to the final activities:
 0. There was a plague obstacle course, featuring a physical challenge for each plague. The goal was to move through each plague in chronological order, earning the freedom to:
 1. **Make a "freedom cup" craft project. See pictures [here](https://photos.app.goo.gl/DZhdHZAHSd2QdaAk7).**
 2. A great time was had by all.

Looking ahead:

a. **There are three** (3) more class days left in the year.

i. I want to acknowledge and appreciate our amazing faculty that has held us together through in-person and virtual learning this year. They are amazing.

1. **Last Sunday of BE InSpired! is May 22nd**, when we will have a 'learning appreciation' ceremony – the details of which are forming right now. We will appreciate our teachers with spoken words and gifts, our families with BE InSpired! goodies, and students with special trinkets that symbolize and display their learning.
 - . We will acknowledge our community togetherness with a "See you soon" picnic.
 - i. We will officially open registration for the coming year.
 - ii. We will invite all to the brand new "Family Shabbat" concept in development for June 10th:
2. **Family Shabbat is here!**

Has been the dream of Scott and Rabbi Josh for years. COVID got in the way after our first pilot event.

- i. We are rebooting and planning to have a family-oriented Shabbat experience that will set the model for the coming year. It will be time-content-and age- appropriate for all who attend, infant through senior citizens.
 - 1. First pass is being designed and executed by Rabbi Josh and Scott. Then we will bring other members in and form a committee that will eventually take over the task of planning the monthly experience for the congregation. It will be interactive, fun, early enough for young families, and appropriate for anyone in the congregation that would like to attend.

d. Summer

- i. I would like us to have a camp/summer blessing activity before we leave
- ii. Tot Shabbat every 1st Friday of the month – through summer
- iii. We will try to schedule (previously unsuccessful) family summer activities