

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Annual Meeting June 10th, 2022

Attendance

Aimee Yermish	Joel Moskowitz
Andy Neirenborg	Joel Perlmutter
Ann Barysh	John Harper
Arnie Young	Jordan Oshlag
Ashira Stevens	Judith Lytel
Barbara Klipper	Judy Goldberg
Barbara Miller	Judy Gross
Barry David	Karen Blumenfeld
Beth Schine	Ken Fishman
Barry David	Larry Haydu
Bernie Horn	Laurie Margolies
Beth Schine	Lee Mason
Bonnie Miller	Linda Hirsch
Bridget Hodder	Linda Klein
Carol Sheingold	Lisa Goodman
Carole Frieband	Liz David
Carolyn Schwartz	Marilyn Rand
Carrie Fuchs	Marla Lewitus
Cat Kaner	Marjorie Pechet
Cynthia Myersberg	Marjorie Raskin
Dan Goodman	Martin Brauer
David Alter	Marty Weiskoff
David Daniel Klipper	Maxine Haron
David Waldman	Michael Brown
Debbie Glass	Michael Gvelber
Debby Young	Michael Joachim
Elaine Barnartt-Goldstein	Michelle Fineblum
Ellen Glickman-Simon	Neil Frieband
Eric Rappaport	Nicci Meadow
Ellen Tohn	Pam MacArthur
Fern Chertok	Peter Dain
Gail Kazin	Phyllis Fitzpatrick
Gail Shapiro	PJ Feynman
Gil Wolin	Rachel Goldner
Howard Birnbaum	Ricardo Lewitus
Ilan Mizrahi	Roberta Unger
Jane Brauer	Sandy Grace
Janet Buchwald	Sarah Bailin
Janet Strassman-Perlmutter	Sarah Green Vaswani
Jeff Alexander	Sheila Goldberg
Jeff Pechet	Sheila Watnick
Jerry Kazin	Shirley Hui
Jim Billings	Silvia Glick
Joan Makepeace	Steve Balzac
Jocelyn Bailin	

Steve Probst
Susan Cohen
Susan Phillips
Susan Reich
Susan Tohn
Tim Allik
Toby Kopman
Vivian Tseng
Zoe Yale

Staff:
Rabbi Joshua Breindel
Scott Newman
Shoni Aronivich

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Zoom

Welcome and President's Address: Jim Billings

Thank you all for being here to conduct the sacred work of our Beth El community. Today's meeting has three purposes:

1. To inform the congregation about everything that has been going on at Beth El.
2. To review the budget and approve the revenue for Congregation Beth El for the upcoming year.
3. To elect the new officers and directors for the Board of Congregation Beth El.

Some of these items are informal, some will require a formal vote.

Zoom protocol: Please raise your hand using the reaction button if you want to speak. Each speaker will be limited to 1.5 minutes. We are a community in transition and transition brings anxiety. Please be brief and respectful.

Before we start, I'd like us to take a moment to recall those in our Beth El community whom we have lost over the past year:

Michael Leis

Sandy Block

Susan Weiskoff

May their memories forever be a blessing.

There are a few things I would like to say:

- A big *Thank-You* to our Covid Committee members (Laurie Margolies, David Kreiger, Craig Ross, Cynthia Myersberg and Beth Schine) for all their continued diligent work on our behalf. We owe them a great deal of gratitude for continuing to keep us safe.
- Another big *thank-you* to the Cantor Search committee. Much hard work was done in a consistent and thorough manner throughout the year. Ultimately, through no fault of theirs, our search did not yield a desired result.
- We appreciate their dedication and diligence. A new Cantor Search team will be convened shortly and the process will continue in the upcoming year.
- This year the Board of Directors, with lots of work by our Combatting Antisemitism committee, voted that Congregation Beth El adopt the IHRA definition of Antisemitism. This is the same definition used by over 35 countries around the world and many towns, cities, communities, and states in the US. The town of Sudbury will be voting next Sunday on a resolution to adopt the same language. Kol HaKavod to our Combatting Antisemitism team.
- I am taking a couple of minutes to acknowledge a few members of the congregation for their devotion and efforts on behalf of our congregation:
- Sabina Pestka, our teen representative on the Board for the past two years. She has showed up for nearly every meeting and contributed an important point of view. We wish her luck as she heads off to college.
- Steve Probst is leaving the Board after over 15 years of service. He has held many roles, and this past year he took on leadership of the Finance Committee as VP Finance. We thank him for his many years of dedication and service to Beth El.
- Craig Ross has been the lead person keeping us connected virtually all throughout Covid. He has consistently been the first in and the last out. We simply would not have been able to remain connected these past two years without his expertise and tireless efforts.
- It has been an honor to serve as your president these past two years. I have grown in many ways and managed challenged I never knew I could manage. There have also been many blessings to my service. I am glad that I did it.

D'var: Rabbi Breindel

B'ruchim Haba'yim – welcome and blessings to all

Thank you:

- Jim: for your service to and love for our community.
- Ritual leaders: your passion and creativity has helped to keep us whole
- Office staff: you helped to keep us going even when we thought we couldn't go on anymore
- Scott and Shoni: for keeping our school community together and our young ones and their families nurtured and whole
- Josimar: For your tireless efforts to keep us clean, organized, and in ship shape.
- All Committees: you help keep us vibrant and whole and in alignment with our vision and values.
- Community: You are, we are, Beth El.

The priestly blessing is both singular and plural. This applies to our community as well; we are both individual members *and* we are a community. We all have gifts as individuals that we can share with the entire community. We need one another – as a group we bring our individual strengths to support and strengthen our community. We are all made in the divine image, we all see God's light in the faces of one another, we share that light with our loved ones and our community. Note that the very last word of the priestly blessing is Shalom. Peace. We offer one another light, love, dignity and peace.

Rabbi Breindel led the community in the priestly blessing.

Approval of the minutes from the 2021 Annual Meeting – Jocylyn Bailin

Motion: to approve the minutes from last year's Annual Meeting

Motion Approved: unanimously

Cantor Search Committee II: Judy Goldberg and Janet Strassman-Perlmutter

We are the co-chairs of the next phase of the Cantor search. We want to express our sincere gratitude to Howard Boles and Bonnie Jensen, the co-chairs of this year's search, as well as their entire committee for all their hard work this past year. We are immensely grateful for their efforts and their offer of support as we move forward. We will be searching for a cantorial professional to support and enhance our vibrant, participative, and joyful ritual worship at Beth El, one who brings the skills we need; in turn we will support that person with the salary that they need. We will build a committee that is reflective of the variety and pluralism that exists within our congregation. If you are interested in being part of this group, please email either one of us. Please understand that if you are not selected to be on the committee it is because we have reached a committee size and balance that we believe will be best for our goals.

Virtual Hevra: Carolyn Schwartz

Virtual Hevra Committee members: Ann Barysh (co-Director Membership), Ann Kramer (co-Director Membership) Steve Breit (Director), Andy Goldberg (Director), Sarah Green Vaswani (SAG), Jerry Kazin (VP Tsibur/House), David Waldman, Carolyn Schwartz (VP Tefilah/Ritual).

Over the past twenty-seven months, faith communities around the country have been dealing with the challenges caused by COVID. Beth El has demonstrated patience, flexibility, and creativity in dealing with this "new normal." However, as we address our future, we must deal with certain realities.

One reality is financial; despite our synagogue's commendable ethic of volunteer energy, we have expenses - salaries, utilities, upkeep and security. While we are blessed with donations to our many special funds, Beth El relies on members' dues to cover our expenses.

Our membership numbers have dropped. Because of Covid and related fears some have simply stayed away. Some have relocated, and coming to Beth El is no longer tenable. We do not question or challenge anyone's choices, but as is typical of the Beth El spirit, we are exploring new options that support keeping our members! This presentation explains a new form of membership: a Virtual Hevra. It is available to those of us who meet some specific criteria at a reduced membership fee. The Virtual Hevra makes it possible to stay a member of Beth El, enjoying many but not all of the membership privileges. Because it is an innovative concept, its roll out will require tweaking and patience from the Beth El community.

- Our Virtual Hevra is a **retention tool**, allowing us to **retain members** who would leave due to moving out of the area or physical disability, and **regain members** who have already left for these reasons
- Our Virtual Hevra **builds community** and **maintains connections**
- Our Virtual Hevra is an opportunity for Beth El to once again be an **innovation leader** during a time of changing religious practice and norms
- Our Virtual Hevra **furtheres Beth El's inclusion goals**

Proposal:

We are asking to approve a new membership category "Virtual Hevra" with the following eligibility criteria:

live at least 50 miles or a 60-minute drive from Beth El *or*
have a physical disability that prevents you from traveling to Beth El

Membership fee of \$900 per household family

This membership category entails:

Remote access to services and celebrations including High Holidays and other festivals

Remote access to Torah Study, Adult Ed., Events, and Committee meetings (not in person) → Limited access to Pastoral Care (at clergy's discretion)

Clergy support for life-cycle events on a fee-for-service basis

No voting at Annual Meeting.

This new membership category will be piloted for one year.

Discussion:

Q: Disability definition. Much discussion centered around the definition of "disability". For example: does it cover mental health as well as physical health? What about someone who has a scent allergy – is this a disability? There are many reasons someone cannot access the building; not all are mobility-related. People with disabilities are full members of our community, it is discriminatory to include people with disabilities on a Virtual Hevra membership category.

Q: What about the current "Friends of Beth El" membership category. Does this Virtual Hevra replace that?

A: The Friends category is more of a category for fundraising than membership. Those folks remain on our mailing lists, in our directory, etc. The Virtual Hevra is about participating in our community.

Q: how will this work when anyone can access everything at Beth El anyway – the zoom and/or livestream links are posted on our web page, and we stream services on FB live as well.

A: we will require people to log into services with identifying information and will retain this data. After a certain number of logins, we will reach out to them and initiate a conversation about membership. We've been doing this for years already when we see someone showing up repeatedly at Beth El in person.

The Inclusion Committee has requested to work with the Virtual Hevra Committee on refining the proposal.

This is a pilot program and does not require a vote at this time. If we decide to make it permanent, we will bring it back to the community for a vote at next year's Annual Meeting.

Security Task Force; Ellen Glickman-Simon

A big thank you to the members of this task force who have been thoughtful, dedicated, and hard-working: Jim Billings, Judy Goldberg, Jerry Kazin, Chuck Kukla, Marjorie Raskin, Gail Shapiro, Beth Schine.

- The task force has been meeting bimonthly since mid-March of this year.
- We started by looking at the work from the past security committees and created a database of all our security information from over the years.
- We have been working with the wider Jewish community on this sacred and important work. CJP has a tremendous number of resources and information available for all congregations, as well as consultants with whom we have been communicating on a regular basis. Additionally, we have been working closely with Chief Nix of the Sudbury police department as well as outside security experts.
- We have thoroughly reviewed every single door, window, and any other potential point of egress in the building. We are awaiting a final report on these details which should be ready in July.
- We applied for and received a 5k grant from CJP to address security issues.
- We have scheduled two CJP security workshops that will be available to the entire Beth El community: On July 26th there will be Active Threat Training and on September 8th we will hold a training for ushers and greeters. Sign-ups for these workshops will be coming out soon; look for the email and sign up!

School Updates:

Scott Newman

K-6 program

Scott shared a video of the Education programs in action. The video is available on the Beth El website. “We have done so much **Lo Alecha Hamlacha ligmor...** It does not feel like work because we love what we are doing so much. Having a synagogue based school implies that we have a commitment to generations of Jewish continuity. Learning cannot take place without a community; we stand by our practices and values of our mission – to make more Jews.

Studying tradition

Knowing our history

Learning rituals and customs

Taking comfort and delight in community and belonging

When we create community we create a garden, a rich soil for Jews to set roots and grow.

Scott reviewed what happened in the school the year prior to this. He then noted that the Hebrew program has been added back for this year.

Other items of note: we gained a family

We didn't lose any families due to lack of engagement

- We pitched a tent in the parking lot and held classes outside together until it got too cold. We rejoiced in being together outdoors.
- Once we moved indoors we used large common spaces, not classrooms, in order to maintain social distancing. We hired specialist to help us with Hebrew, with 1:1 tutoring for those who needed it and 2x weekly for older students. Overall our mission is the same.:
- We are ready to change teaching modalities as needed
- We continue to tend to and care for our physical space
- Our students and families feel that Beth El is their HOME

Scott gave thanks to everyone who helped make this school year a success: Marla Lewitus, Fern Chertok, Sheila Goldberg and Marni Friedman, who is joining this illustrious crew.

Shoni Aronovich

7-12 program

Shoni started by thanking Sabrina for serving as the youth liaison to the Board for the past two years and welcomed Zoe Yale who is stepping in to the role.

The Jewish Learning Collaborative of MetroWest is a K-7th grade collaborative program between Or Atid, Temple Beth Shalom, and Beth El to provide a group learning opportunity. The students benefit in several ways from this collaborative; they are part of a larger and more viable learning community, they get to learn from multiple clergy members, and they are able to build connections with other young Jews from across the MetroWest area. Currently our middle school students (grade 6 and 7) participate in JLCMW, our younger students do not.

Jewish Learning Opportunities for Teens (JLoft) is a very successful Beth El initiated program. This program focuses on creating social and community service oriented programming for teens all across the MetroWest area. These include our MLK Day of Service, L'Taken (Washington DC social justice program), a spring community service trip to New Orleans, and more. Some of these events have been put on hold due to Covid, however, this past February, thanks to a huge effort on the part of many people, we managed to put together an MLK Day of Service that was outdoors and/or home based. It was wildly successful, with over 100 participants! JLoft has been funded mostly by grants, including 22k in grants in FY 2021-2022; there will be over 23k in grants in FY 2022-2023.

HiBur has been on hold for the past three years. However, Shoni reported that it is BACK! We are drawing teen participants from a half dozen local synagogues as well as some unaffiliated teens. Stay tuned for more updates!

Annual Budget Presentation: Steve Probst

Steve shared a PowerPoint presentation with the community.

Steve reminded the gathering that the number that we as a congregation vote on today is the revenues for the budget, not the expenses. This is how our bylaws work – the congregation approves the revenues and the Board votes on how the funds will be spent. We are sharing the budget with you so that you can see how and where the money goes. Also, we want to share with you the process for developing the budget:

1. In early spring the Finance Committee meets with VP's and staff to get a sense of what the needs of the congregation are and set budget priorities.
2. In March or April the FC runs a draft budget by the Board. There is lots of fruitful discussion and the FC takes all this into consideration.
3. In April and/or May the FC holds budget forum(s), open and available to anyone in the congregation. Again, good feedback comes out of this which the FC takes into consideration.
4. In May the FC presents a final budget to the Board and the Board votes on it.
5. The budget is brought to the Annual Meeting in June.

There are three main areas of expenses:

Pulpit – this is the clergy

Administration – office personnel and supplies for the building (cleaning, postage, YFEC supplies, etc)

Youth and Education – our education personnel and teaching materials

Other – small amounts of other expenses that pop up unexpectedly The finance committee monitors the budget carefully, looking at reports every month.

The budget consists of expenses and revenues. On the **expense** side, 80% of Beth E's expenses are spent on staff (salaries plus benefits). The remaining amount is mostly spent on maintaining and using the building. On the **revenue** side we have dues, grants, fundraising, and the spendable funds that we receive from our endowment funds. Differences pop up from year to year based upon circumstances: for example, the administrative costs were less this year because the building was closed most of the time, and this year our

pulpit costs were also less due to having no Cantor. Due to the confluence of both of these and sustained revenues, we actually came out on top of our budget for the first time in a long time!

Steve then shared the Budget Motion as approved by the Board of Directors.

Discussion:

Q: How closely are we monitoring our costs? They seem to remain the same year to year despite differing circumstances.

A: We have examined every single one of our costs very carefully., including having difficult conversations. We will be voting only on the revenue part of the budget; if your conscience so moves you, vote against it.

Q: We used to vote on the budget line by line.

A: In 2006 we changed the bylaws so that this doesn't happen anymore.

Q: Fundraising expectations went down when we were not able to be together as a community. Can we increase income from Fundraising once we are gathering again?

A: We continue to set an ambitious number and so far we have continued to meet it.

Q: We see a huge deficit in the budget every year. Are the assumptions built in sustainable? For example, can we afford two clergy? Can we afford to remain a freestanding congregation, or should we be looking to merge?

A: we have looked at these trends carefully. Based on current projections, we could run out of money in as few as 10 years. Mergers have been discussed on and off over the past few years. Our school programs are already doing this; our middle and high school programs are now (or will soon be) collaborative among multiple local congregations. Six years ago we convened a task force to reduce our costs. We reduced our expenses significantly then; what we have left is really the bare bones. As far as clergy goes, the way our congregation works we rely on a two-clergy model. If we offer less, we will lose members and our revenues will shrink accordingly. Even though we have fewer members, the demands on the clergy are still as high as before.

Rabbi Breindel spoke up: This community has extremely high expectations of its clergy. I have been running a marathon at a sprint pace for the past three years. Let's think about how our staffing reflects our congregational values. What do we want to feel like as a community and what connections do we want to make?

Q: kicking the can on depleting funds means we must make tough decisions. When and how are we going to make them? What are the functional needs of a congregation of 200 or 250 members and how can we make it possible to operate successfully at that level?

A: The difference is between growing to 200 members and shrinking to 200 members. When you shrink to 200 members you have structures in place that if you remove them, you will lose members and continue to shrink.

Q: Numerous comments in the chat questioned the efficacy and usefulness of having security guards. There is a concern that it is not money well spent on our end.

A: Our school families have made it very clear that they feel safer with security. We will continue to provide hired security when children are in the building.

Q: What is our strategy for growing our membership ? Are we looking at other ways to engage non members with events where we charge for attendance? Would we consider creating a Torah class together of non members and charging a rate for the class and hosting the bar mitzvah? So many unaffiliated families hire a tutor and host the bar mitzvah at a hotel or at home.

A: This last part has not been considered. We are looking in to the first two points.

Motion: To approve the proposed revenues of \$702,254 for FY 2021-2022

Dues of \$528,599, with a standard dues rate of \$3,400 per member household

Religious School tuition of \$38,838

High Holiday ticket revenue of \$7,200

Miscellaneous other revenue of \$2,699 — Release of \$50,000 in Carob Tree funds

Under this budget, Beth El will use \$74,918 from other sources to cover total planned expenses in excess of the approved total revenue.

Motion approved 87% in favor, 10% opposed, 3% abstained

Capital Budget Presentation: Jerry Kazin

Jerry explained that there will be three separate votes today; one is the basics and other two are special projects. Please pay attention and take the time to vote on each one. Jerry shared a PowerPoint presentation with the congregation.

Annual Capital Budget: These are the items that we must fund. The spending comes out of both capital funds (Building and Capital) depending upon the request; most regular maintenance and repair expenses come out of the capital budget. The expenses include items such as annual cleaning, window and door repairs due to water damage, updates to computer and av systems, and such. This year's budget also includes a line item to replace the doors leading from the social hall to outside. They currently do not close well and pose a security risk. Our main front doors also had the same problem; we received a security grant from the CJP to retrofit those to be more secure; these rear doors must be paid for from our own funds.

Q: Is replacing those doors simply security theater? We have so many windows here. Can we apply a film to the windows so that we can see out and others cannot see in?

A: CJP security team agrees with you about the windows, and they recommended that we replace the doors. Research has shown that most attackers will seek to come in through an unsecured door. Few break windows.

Rabbi Breindel: If you have concerns regarding Beth El's security measures, please reach out to Ellen Glickman-Simon who heads our security task force. Our task force and the CJP security team have been working closely over the past year and are smart people.

***Motion:** To approve the Capital Budget for Basic Needs of \$23,350*

***Motion approved:** 80 in favor, 2 opposed, 1 abstention.*

Special Projects:

I: Beautification Project phase 2. We have already done a tremendous amount of work over the past year to update the look and feel of Beth El. These efforts are visible in all areas of the synagogue, from the hallways to the library to the school wing and more. This next phase continues that work by addressing other needs, including new furniture for the library and the teen room, window shades, carpeting updates, and more. T

Discussion:

Q: who is authorized to determine where these funds will come from and how they will be spent?

A: The Beautification committee will make these decisions and bring them to the Board for approval.

Q: Is there a priority order to these items?

A: Not yet. The committee will solicit input from the community on how to prioritize and will make decisions.

Q: Does voting yes for the beautification allowance impact the funding for the gender-neutral bathroom?

A: No. Voting on this budget only authorizes the beautification committee to go ahead and do the work once we identify where the funds will come from.

Q: With fewer people in the building, can we put some of these projects on hold and put our money and efforts into increasing our membership. You believe that our building may not be beautiful enough to attract new members, but as we are mostly virtual anyway.

A: This is good input. A lot of effort has been put into identifying what needs to be done, so that when we do start up again in person we will be ready.

Statement from a member of the congregation:

Asking for the funding for both the Beautification and the Gender-Neutral Bathroom as Special Projects imply that we do not have the funds for either one. We are being asked to approve spending without funding to support it. If we end up doing targeted fundraising for either or both of these projects it will cut into the fundraising for the annual operating budget, which we just approved a few minutes ago.

***Motion:** The congregation approves the continuation of Beautification Phase 2 during 2022 – 2023 to commence when the funds for these line items are identified; the exact items to be purchased and installed will be based on the funds identified.*

Motion results: 48 in favor, 28 opposed, 10 abstentions.

II Gender-Neutral Bathroom. The Gender Neutral Bathroom Committee’s report indicated that the congregation was in favor of creating a Gender Neutral Bathroom. This continues Beth El’s ongoing progressive and inclusive philosophy for Jewish community. The Board of Directors approved this recommendation at the April board meeting with the understanding that this activity should be finished by the 2023 High Holidays. At the time of the Board’s vote, plans for the bathroom were not ready. Therefore this vote did not include provisions for funding.

The proposed new bathroom will be both gender neutral and handicapped accessible. The location for the proposed bathroom is governed by:

- Available plumbing
- Footprint
- Building codes and regulations

This proposal will place the bathroom in the classroom wing in the location currently occupied by the cantor’s office

- The bathroom will have a lockable door to insure privacy
- Classroom five will be converted into the cantor’s office
- The shelving in the current cantor’s office will be preserved
- Extra storage space will be included
- It will be ADA compliant (which our current bathrooms are not)

Discussion:

Q: First of all, a big thank you and acknowledgement of all the hard work and thoughtfulness that has gone into this effort. If we go forward with this project, we lose a classroom. This work has been happening so fast that the YFEC has not had an opportunity to discuss any potential impact on the school. Assuming that we will both eventually return to in-person learning, and that we intend to grow the school population, how do you explain reducing classroom space?

A: This is a great question and one that we have considered extensively. In a nutshell, though, due to building codes and regulations, we cannot put a new bathroom anywhere else in the building. It came down to a tradeoff between the need for an office for the cantor and the need for a classroom. Classroom five is already partly storage. This point was discussed for quite a while.

Q: What happens if we need extra classroom space?

A: If we grow, we will address that need at that time.

Q: If/when we grow, we could we potentially add a trailer for extra space?

A: That can be considered.

Q: (statement) From a recruitment perspective, new members will look for a bathroom that is a safe space for their child, so this is a bonus.

Q (statement): many synagogues, churches, theaters, etc, including Hebrew College, all have all bathrooms designated as gender-neutral. Beth El is way behind the trend here. We do not need to build a new bathroom to for our non-binary community, especially one that we cannot afford. This constitutes “othering” the trans/non-binary community, not including them.

Appreciation expressed for all those on the GN Bathroom committee who have worked hard on this all year. It is difficult work; even if we disagree we can agree that doing the work was time consuming and important.

Motion: *The congregation approves the construction of a Gender Neutral/Handicapped Accessible bathroom during to be ready by the 2023 High Holidays to commence when final costs are known and the funds for these line items are identified*

Motion Withdrawn

Presenting the slate of officers for the Board of Directors: Susan Tohn

On behalf of the Nominating Committee we want to thank those on the current Board of Directors who are stepping down after their service this year. We would also like to encourage any and all of you to step up into leadership. There are many opportunities, from small project to committees to Board service. We welcome you all!

The Nominating Committee is responsible for Board nominations only. Here is how the nominating process works: In December, members of the Nominating Committee starts interviewing the current Board members. They find out how the Board member is doing and ask about plans to continue and/or plans for future engagement in other areas. Once those interviews are complete the Nominating Committee meets to determine which spots on the Board for the upcoming year may need to be filled. Throughout the months of January through April they work with committee heads, staff, and clergy to identify and recruit new leadership. In April/May the Committee makes formal recruitment calls. The slate for the new year is finalized by early May.

The following is the slate of the Board of Directors for Congregation Beth El for the coming year:

President: Michelle Fineblum

Treasurer: Neal Frieband

Clerk: Jocylyn Bailin

VP Finance: John Harper

VP Tsibur/House: Jerry Kazin

VP Tikkun Olam: Allison Alter

VP Youth and Family Education: Fern Chertok

VP Tefillah /Ritual: Toby Kopman and Judith Lytel

VP Talmud Torah: Barbara Miller

VP Human Resources: Debby Glass

Director of Fundraising: Judy Goldberg

Director of Membership: Ann Barysh

Ad-hoc directors:

Cynthia Myersberg

Youth Director: Zoe Yale

Past President: Jim Billings

Discussion:

Q: The Nominating Committee is not adhering to the Beth El bylaws.

A: The meeting chairperson pointed out that Beth El is, in fact, out of compliance with our bylaws in many , many areas. The last time our bylaws were updated was 16 years ago. Organizations such as ours run on norms rather than written rules. Until our bylaws can be updated this is how we run. We are all volunteers and all doing our best for the community that we love.

Q: If the norms are working anymore then we need to make clear that we need more volunteers.

A: Agreed.

Q: (statement) The Nominating Committee and other committees are always looking for volunteers. Please think about how you can share your unique talents with Beth El. Feel free to reach out to any committee head to volunteer (the information for every single Beth El committee is available on our Beth El website).

Motion: To approve the slate of officers for the Board of Directors for Congregation Beth El

Motion approved: 68 in favor, 2 opposed, 2 abstentions

Oath of office administered by Rabbi Breindel

Presentation by Michelle Fineblum, incoming President, to Jim Billings, outgoing President.

Michelle gave a lovely speech of deep appreciation to Jim for stepping into the role of President. Little did he know he would be at the helm through an intense period of dislocation due to Covid. Throughout it all he remained steadfast, calm, and true to his nature and his word. We cannot appreciate enough all the hard work he has done for our Beth El community. His love for this place is strong, unwavering, and true. Thank you Jim. Michelle presented Jim with a note indicating a financial contribution was made on his behalf by the Board of directors to B'chol Lashon, an organization chosen by Jim.

Meeting adjourned: 1:34 pm

Congregation Beth El Operating Budget: Michael Joachim

Brought to you by the members of the Finance Committee: Steve Probst, Michael Joachim, Neil Frieband, John Harper, Steve Feldman, Jerry Kazin, Shirley Hui and Judy Goldberg

We will be voting today on revenues, not expenses. This is how our bylaws work – the congregation approves the revenues and the Board votes on how the funds will be spent. We are sharing the budget with you so that you can see how and where the money goes. Also, we want to share with you the process for developing the budget:

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Other – small amounts of other expenses that pop up unexpectedly.

The finance committee monitors the budget carefully, looking at reports every month.

The budget consists of expenses and revenues. On the **expense** side, 80% of Beth E's expenses are spent on staff (salaries plus benefits). The remaining amount is mostly spent on maintaining and using the building. On the **revenue** side we have dues, grants, fundraising, and the spendable funds that we receive from our endowment funds.

Discussion:

Q: we have been talking for several years now about the need to grow membership. There is nothing in the budget for this.

A: There is a small line item for this in the administrative costs. We don't know what the needs will be so we put in this placeholder amount. Additionally, if we need more funds for this we can request it from the Fund For the Future, as this is exactly what it's for.

Q: What about staff pensions?

A: They are included in the salaries.

Motion: To approve the proposed revenues of \$708,000 for FY 2021-2022

Motion approved: unanimously

Capital Budget Presentation: Jerry Kazin

This budget reflects everything needed to keep the building running – not just capital items (things we purchase) but labor and maintenance as well. There are four main parts to this budget:

1. Capital items (things we purchase – computers, compost bins, zoom technology)
2. Maintenance and repairs – broken windows, etc
3. Annual cleaning
4. Line item for unexpected costs

This budget reflects the needs in all these areas.

Discussion:

Q: The outdoor menorah needs repairs. Is this in the budget?

A: We can divert funds for that need.

Q: Why are there no line items for the upgrades to the library and the donation bins?

A: Because we don't yet know the cost of this.

Motion: To approve the Capital Budget as presented.

Motion approved: unanimously

Beautification Committee announcement: Jerry Kazin

You may have noticed that already there have been some changes to the appearance of Beth El. There is a small group working in this; we are looking for additional members. If you would like to join this group, please email Jerry.

Covid Task Force: Craig Ross

First of all, I want to express my admiration of and thanks for all the really hard work that has been done by this committee. We have worked hard this past year, always with the best interests of the community in mind. They were named above by Jim; I won't repeat here.

My background: I'm a PhD epidemiologist, a faculty member at the Boston University School of Public Health. I'm not specifically trained as an infectious disease specialist. I usually do substance use research but when

there's a global pandemic and you have epidemiologist after your name you find yourself pulled into becoming an infectious disease advisor. I am going to be talking today about the interpretation of the science.

In Massachusetts, and specifically Middlesex County to date:

About 77% of people that are 12 years of age and older that are eligible to receive a vaccine have had at least one dose.

About 56% of adults are fully vaccinated.

What this means is that people who have been fully vaccinated have received maximum protection from serious illness. It is not true that they may not get sick or get a covid infection,, but it is true even if they do receive a covid infection the disease is not severe it's typically like a flu or cold and then it passes. If vaccinated, you are also less likely to transmit the virus.

What about those who cannot be vaccinated for whatever reason? How do we keep them safe? Rule #1 for people who remain unvaccinated is to wear a mask and to continue to distance and perhaps try to avoid long periods of indoor contact. Masking and distancing have proven to be very effective in protecting people. If you are unvaccinated because of uncertainty about the vaccines, I encourage you to come and speak with me. Your concerns are valid and I'd be happy to talk with you. With that thought in mind, if we are fully vaccinated and we want to participate in activities within the synagogue, we are protected. You are at very low risk of having the disease at all and if you do catch the disease you are at very low risk of it being severe. If you wish to participate in activities at the synagogue but have chose or are unvaccinated for whatever reason you can participate with not minimal risk but with low risk by continuing to wear a mask.

Discussion:

Q: Can we take a stand and say that people should be vaccinated unless there are medical or age reasons?

A: This is cultural, not scientific. We won't make an official stance on this; everyone needs to be respected.

What we can promote is that if you are unvaccinated or even vaccinated but have unvaccinated household members or are vaccinated but immunocompromised, you should continue to wear a mask. Vaccinated people do not pose a threat to unvaccinated people and unvaccinated people do not pose a threat to vaccinated people.

Vision Alignment Committee: Fern Chertok

I am here representing the committee; here is the full list of committee members:

Fern Chertok, Jocylyn Bailin, Lisa Breit, Liz David, Judy Spicehandler, Sarah Green-Vaswani, Mitch Rosenberg, John Harper

We have been working for about 6 months and have accomplished a lot so far. Our goal was to create a vision statement that would define our sense of who we are and values we wish express as a congregation that would build on current strengths and traditions as well as innovations to continue as a thriving community. We have been gathering information from a variety of sources. We interviewed 13 lay and professional leaders of successful and innovative Jewish organizations including but not exclusively synagogues both locally and across the country. Many of these organizations work with young adults and young families in specific. We reviewed local housing and school enrollment data from Sudbury and some of the surrounding towns to get a sense of what's happening with young families moving into and having children in the area and what's happened with our school enrollment data.

We also looked at local housing starts (new housing). We also interviewed Beth El staff. We held focus group and individual discussions with 103 members. We conducted a survey, and want to thank all of you for participating in the focus groups and the survey. We had 158 responses to the survey. 59% of those who participated in the survey had not participated in a focus group Our focus group respondents look a lot like our synagogue. 13% were in interfaith households, 13% were households with children 18 or younger, 70% have been members for 20+ years. Overwhelming the vast majority of our members said to us Beth El has really helped them bring Judaism and Jewish living into their homes and into the lives of their families. Beth El affects people. The other finding is that overwhelmingly people said we need to grow. We're not the size we should be. We're either much smaller that we should be or somewhat smaller. Even though people enjoyed the intimacy of a smaller congregation and felt they knew a larger portion of the people they still felt that we need to grow and we need younger families.

Next steps: This coming week we will present more detailed findings to the board. This will include a draft vision statement, a summary of our survey, focus group, and interview data, and recommendations for next steps and priority areas.

Discussion:

Q: When will the report be available to the general congregation?

A: First we will make those reports available to the board then do some editing, I suspect sometime this summer.

Q: There was a previous visioning group a number of years ago. Has the material from that been included?

A: We reviewed it and also spoke at length with members of that previous committee. It has informed our process.

Sustainability presentation: John Harper

In December of 2019 the Board of Directors approved a sustainability resolution. This was an outgrowth of discussions among members of the community about what are we doing about beyond the community to reduce our carbon footprint take action on climate change. The resolution had three components:

1. Focus on our buildings and our operations as a congregation.
2. Look at the environmental footprint and greenhouse gas emissions from our homes and our workplaces and how we're getting between places.
3. Focus on advocacy and awareness in the broader community.

In spite of the pandemic we have made great strides! The Green Team has been incredibly active and productive, through lots of meetings and a tremendous number of hours.

Component 1: Some highlights of what has been done at Beth El

We are now 100% powered by renewable power, both solar and wind.

All of our lighting is now LED

Our kitchen water systems are now high efficiency

We have added layers of insulation

We have a contract to start composting once we are back in the building

Component 2: highlights! 90% of our impact is from our homes and transportation choices. Each of us can and should take action: to that effect we have teamed up with Mass Energize and the Jewish Climate Action Network to set up a framework for individuals to take climate actions. So far, over 70 Beth El households have signed up, and collectively they have taken over 440 actions, and over 700,000 pounds of carbon have been saved by our community. We encourage you to sign up! On the Green Team section of our website there are lots of resources. Additionally, many members of the Green Team are specialists in various areas of green energy use and we are happy to help you – just ask!

Component 3: highlights! JCAN, Dayenu and other organizations are doing great work here. Beth El is partnering with JCAN locally. Towns and cities are taking action too; Sudbury now has community choice electricity. Wayland passed three climate related articles last month. Brookline just voted to cease use of natural gas in new construction.

Everyone can do their part, every little bit helps.

Youth and Family Education: Marla Lewitus, Scott Newman, Shoni Aronovich

Marla: It's been quite a year from the youth and family education group – a huge thank you to the members of our committee who have been terrific through all of this. If you are interested in joining our committee., please give me a shout out somehow or reach out to Scott and we will get you involved.

Scott: Great to see you. I will be presenting about our elementary program; Shoni will be presenting about our middle and high school program.

BEInSpirEd stands for Beth El Innovative Spiritual Education. The idea was that our program was inspired by the spirit of Beth El.

We haven't been in person for the past 15 months That's a long time in the life of a kid. The main task at hand is

to keep our students and families connected. Community is the prerequisite for any Jewish education **Goal 1:** Keep community together, given loss of physical presence. **Goal 2:** Make sure that education is happening. The last weeks of Spring 2020 was our laboratory - all went pretty well! We were lucky that we had already been positioned for online learning. During the first week: digital learning material was sent to students. By second week: we were holding live virtual classes on Zoom. This is a tribute to amazing, flexible faculty. Over summer, our faculty trained and further improved online teaching skills.

Highlights of the Year:

- Sunday mornings became the virtual point of contact. Sundays at 9am Rabbi Josh and I would lead an induction to the day, which included:
 - - Singing and a little Tefila with Scott
 - - Tidbit of Torah with Rabbi Josh

Then the classes went off to breakout rooms. Each class had significant engagement and learning taking place - same as in person. Normalcy, routine, and structure proved to be comforting and grounding for our families.

Other highlights:

Rosh HaShana / Opening Year Care Packages. Each package sent home included honey sticks, coloring pages, and recipes as well as some school supplies.

Channukah Drive Through: on the 6th night. We had bonfires, a pyrotechnic display, glow stick necklaces and each family received a package of sweets, including sufganiyot.

Additional packages were sent home for other holidays including Purim, Passover, and Havdallah.

Looking ahead: Hoping to open next year in person, preparing for both options though (in person and virtual).

Thank you to all our amazing teachers and to this community which supports us and helps us nurture the next generation.

Shoni: Here are the highlights of the high school and middle school programs:

Right after the holidays we launched JLOFT - Jewish Learning Opportunities for Teens, a high school collaboration for seven local congregations. We had about 40 kids across seven congregations participate. It gave our teens opportunities that they would not have had if it was just Beth El.

HiBuR - we didn't go to Israel but we kept the HiBuR alumni active and engaged. The kids had regular meetings with one another.

JLCMW - Jewish Learning Collaborative of Metrowest. We studied online, we cooked together, we even had an in person event for Lag B'Omer at Temple Beth Shalom in Framingham. Our middle school kids also participated in the STOP (Students Together Opposing Prjudice) program.

We did our first (and hopefully last) virtual Purim carnival..

We got together with JLOFT and collaborated with Desk Mates to build desks in our parking lot. Those desks were donated to families who need them for learning at home.

We held Siyyum graduation for Kristina Dain, which was semi-virtual. Her family was there but most of us were at home. We were able to provide a personal and meaningful celebration just as we have for previous years.

For the year to come:

We have 8 middle school students, about 20 if we look at the collaboration with two other temples.

We have 16 kids in our high school, about 40 to 50 if we look at our collaboration with JLOFT

We received \$12,560 for JLOFT from CJP for next year plus \$10,000 bonus for the year that just finished.

Over the past four years we have received almost \$100,000 from CJP for HiBuR, JLOFT, and other efforts.

I want to thank the education committee for all the support this year.

Tribute Book for Lorel: Susan Tohn and Jordan Oshlag

We are in the process of creating a tribute book for Lorel. You have all received information about this and how to participate. Even if you don't add a page you are welcome to donate. All tribute funds raised will be shared between Beth El and the Institute for Jewish Spirituality. Both physical and digital copies will be available.

Presenting the slate of officers for the Board of Directors: Susan Tohn

The following is the slate of the Board of Directors for Congregation Beth El for the coming year:

President: Jim Billings
Treasurer: Neal Frieband
Clerk: Jocelyn Bailin
VP Finance: Steve Probst
VP Tsibur/House: Jerry Kazan
VP Tikkun Olam: Michelle Fineblum
VP Youth and Family Education: Marla Lewitus
VP Tefillah /Ritual: Carolyn Schwartz
VP Talmud Torah: Barbara Miller
VP Human Resources: Debby Glass
Director of Fundraising: Judy Goldberg
Director of Membership: Ann Barysh
Ad-hoc directors:
Steve Breit
Josh Davidson
Andy Goldberg
Cynthia Myersberg
Jake Steinman
Youth Director: Sabina Pestka

***Motion:** To approve the slate of officers for the Board of Directors for Congregation Beth El*

***Motion approved:** unanimously*

Oath of office administered by Rabbi Breindel

Meeting adjourned: 12:20pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jocelyn Bailin, Clerk
Congregation Beth El