

**Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River
Bathroom Project Meeting
July 23, 2023 4:00pm**

Attendance:

In Person: 36

Zoom attendance: 58

D'var: Rabbi Briendel

- Gratitude to many
- Community
- This work benefits us, our children, future congregants
- Holy conversation
- Emet - beyond any one person, need to listen to others' opinions

Bathroom Project Background and Timeline Review: Michelle Fineblum

- This has been a 2 year process
- Speed up more recently

Construction Design - Jerry Kazin – Jerry talked through [presentation](#)

Funding - John Harper covered relevant slides in [presentation](#)

Discussion

- Q: We are not voting on signage today?
- A: Correct!
- Q: Asked about adding mirrors to back of doors, low cost item to add
- A: we will take this into consideration.
- Q: What is the timeline for reconfiguring existing bathrooms in particular in regards to school and HH?
- A: Once the order is placed, it will take ~5-6 weeks for panels to arrive, a few days to install. Ideally the remaining funding will be secured this week ; if so, everything ready for HH
- Q: It is unconscionable that this has taken 2 years and tacking on both bathrooms becoming all gender, this proposal is taking away from making an all gender bathroom becoming available to all, for this wanting single stall bathroom. This resolution is deceptive because it leaves out that these are cis- gender identifying and are not comfortable using same bathroom as cis males. This proposal doesn't protect those who are vulnerable; requesting - wants a single all gender bathroom, not all the bathrooms all-gender
- A: there is and will continue to be one and eventually two single use bathroom down corridor – anyone can use these as private use
- Q :can you please clarify about the use of the rabbi's bathroom?
- A; *Response from Rabbi* - past year he has made it available during programs, he's committed to having it unlocked and available before, during and even beyond construction
- Q (Statement): because of financial ramifications voting no, feels that this is too fast and and excessive use of our funds, Concerned that if we remove Carob T, less spendable \$ for future; targeted fundraising for this project could lead to less in general fund raising.
- Q: If motion passes there will be fewer stalls available for women, and women's bathroom usage and time always exceeds that of mens'. -Proposed keeping the women's room as is and have current male one be gender-neutral
- A: This is not legal ; if we have one gender specific we must have 2

- Q: (statement read on behalf of another member who is currently out of the country) Statement included research and data about assault mostly by cis gendered men, compared othering traumatized people to those currently othered without a gender free restroom.
- Q: (statement) Voiced of support new configuration, didn't realize switch to both and not entirely comfortable with resolution, would like to change motion. Wants to focus only on single use bathroom/cantor's office
- Q (Statement): VP of HR read statement from URJ - committed to having safe, equitable for all; no tolerance of abuse or misconduct policy
- Q: (statement) One congregant offered to go into the gender-neutral bathroom with anyone uncomfortable doing so, extended this offer to anyone walking in the parking lot at night, into the garden etc.
- Q: (statement) Emphatically voting in favor, after 2 years of deliberations, meetings, ... surprised why still coming up with new ideas, need to focus on discomfort and exclusion of community members currently, rabbi's bathroom available, if someone not comfortable with that, why not voting already, The Board voted, they believe that we need to spend money when appropriate. If we don't do this we will have fewer members and new members won't be enticed to join .
- Q: (statement): fully in support of resolution. Nobody is being required to go to bathroom where they may be uncomfortable, expressed confusion as to why there have been comments to that effect. There will always be at least one and mostly likely two single use bathrooms. This plan has been proposed and discussed at prior meetings; the Board has voiced support for this - this discussion is not happening, out of blue. Our leadership has put in tremendous thought and discussion, the finances have been scrutinized closely. If we don't do this we reduce ability to recruit, new members; already we have lost many members for not taking this step.
- Q: What is the plan with respect to the urinal and if replaced with a toilet what is the cost?
- A: Urinal is being enclosed in one stall; would cost \$1000 to be replaced with toilet
- Q: Why does the resolution not include signage?
- A: sign wording important, privacy enhancement important that's focus for today, have time to work out wording for signs further conversation needed
- Q (statement) Spoke in favor of a single use bathroom. This idea was proposed 2 years ago with the goal of improving privacy. The process has taken 2 years, where we consistently agreed upon pathway for single use bathroom. This last-minute switch shows improper leadership and protocol. The Board is not listening to others. By doing this we are taking away rights of women to have a safe place. This will result in many not coming or being members. Proposed: continue discussing signage
- Q: (statement) I am fully supportive of all gender bathroom. I am disturbed by the discussion today. We should have one or two single use all gender bathrooms that should be separate from those for all men and all women
- Q: (statement): feels that we are not listening to one another. Those who are not comfortable using all gender there is already one and soon will be two single use bathrooms. . Let's separate out cost of new door and approve today so read for HH to end wait for those waiting 2 years
- Q: (statement) in full support but many women have experienced extreme sexual abuse and trauma, it's not fair if people (women) have to wait for single stall bathroom
- Q (statement) I have 2 grandchildren ; I believe they'd feel uncomfortable going into bathroom with men
- Q (statement) I have 2 children, both nonbinary; I can count at least 8 other member families, all also in the nonbinary spectrum, all who currently avoid the bathroom at Beth El. Everywhere my family goes my child looks for a nongender bathroom; they usually go where one of their parents go. I want my kids to feel safe using bathroom; this is not currently the case with existing configuration.
- Q (Statement) The Board has voted on this already. The purpose today is to vote on the construction, Everyone is being listened to. Perspective: with the 2 single use bathrooms in total there will be 8 toilets.

- Q (Statement): I have learned from the prolonged congregational conversation that happened in June . I've been working to understand position of those who are nonbinary and have nowhere for them to go to the bathroom at all. I am in full support of resolution and also happy to accompany those uncomfortable. Personally has used and felt comfortable using mens' rooms before, this is a difficult and not new situation for nonbinary, .
- Q (Statement) Reminding everyone that there have been many opportunities over the past two years to be a part of this discussion. Urging people to consider trans/nonbinary perspective, reminding everyone that people who are trans are fluid and how they look many not match what others think gender is. Everyone has and will have a safe space to use a restroom.
- Q (Statement) speaking as a parent of nonbinary child who also has a sibling that is a strong ally of them,. Have recently been supporting their child in navigating safe spaces in camp, most issues around bathroom use; their child was repeatedly being told they were using the wrong bathroom, child almost didn't return to camp because of the constant commenting. This is happening here too, and its tough. We at Beth EI need to model safe spaces in our congregation for our kids at BE. Believe there's flexibility with signage and signs can change over time
- Q (statement) I am a 30 year member, a cis-gender white woman with privilege. Many of us belong to that category, both my kids are trans. I am speaking from that perspective - my heart is breaking because last year at this time her kids "broke up" with BE and have not come back, they feel unseen and unwanted, feel like they have been "slapped in face by those who raised them," Hearing that so many of my friends at BE feel unsafe, while recognizing their panic/trauma is disconcerting. But already that building doesn't feel safe for many members. This is not who BE is. I want thinking about comfort to be a given, hierarchy of needs at the top, I want for us to lead way in being safe and taking care of one another – we need to vote, considering who we are as a congregation and who we want be going forward. My family almost left because want to be in a place where we can pray with our kids. Asked everyone who is thinking of leaving, please consider taking leap with us
- Q (statement) support what was just said.
- Q (statement): No disagreement that needed single stall bathroom by cantor's, proposal to chop current bathrooms in ½ [can't], Perhaps we can have ushers be available to escort those uncomfortable
- Rabbi: Breathe ... we are one community. We will always protect one's honor and safety and dignity, we are committed to our congregation's honor and safety. THAT'S who BE is. At the same time it is indelible that people have expressed trauma/discomfort. I believe in the power of hope; remember that the Jewish people have experienced challenges. Let's recognize we have vibrant new cantor, we have many recent prospective new members who are looking for this kind of space, not just for this reason but it's part of the totality. May we continue to shine light into dark places and embrace one another with respect and love, ask and compel all to engage in conversation together, can't afford more brokenness in our world

At 6:08 Michelle suggests we don't go with vote on David Waldman's amendment, people are already leaving, let's vote now

Amendment I:

Resolved: in recognition of Beth EI 's commitment to enabling safe, private and comfortable bathroom access for all, the Beth EI membership approves the construction of a new single-occupancy, all gender ADA-compliant bathroom and related construction of a new cantor's office, and approves ~~privacy and accessibility improvements to the two current bathrooms,~~ with the capital costs to be funded equally from existing Beth EI resources and from a dedicated fund-raising effort, provided that no construction shall begin on the single-occupancy bathroom until all of the funds have been raised.

Vote:

Totals: Yes: 6, No: 70

Amendment does not carry

Amendment II

Resolved: in recognition of Beth El 's commitment to enabling safe, private and comfortable bathroom access for all, the Beth El membership approves the construction of a new single-occupancy, all gender ADA-compliant bathroom and related construction of a new cantor's office, with the capital costs to be funded equally from existing Beth El resources and from a dedicated fund-raising effort, provided that no construction shall begin on the single-occupancy bathroom until all of the funds have been raised. A decision on signage for the existing bathrooms has not been made, and a follow-up process will be developed to make a decision on signage.

Vote:

Totals: Yes: 32, No: 46

Amendment does not carry

Motion:

Resolved: in recognition of Beth El 's commitment to enabling safe, private and comfortable bathroom access for all, the Beth El membership approves the construction of a new single-occupancy, all gender ADA-compliant bathroom and related construction of a new cantor's office, and approves privacy and accessibility improvements to the two current bathrooms, with the capital costs to be funded equally from existing Beth El resources and from a dedicated fund-raising effort, provided that no construction shall begin on the single-occupancy bathroom until all of the funds have been raised.

Motion Vote:

Totals: Yes: 75, No: 3

Motion Carries

Meeting meeting ends: 6:20pm

Meeting Attendance

Matia Angelou

Shira Gaudet-Rhodes

Jess Baker

Elaine Barnartt-Goldstein

Ann Barysh

Jim Billings

Beth Birnbaum

Howard Birnbaum

Debbie Blicher

Jane Brauer

Martin Brauer

Susan Cohen

Peter Dain

Barry David

Liz David

Patrick Doyle

Debbie Feldman

Carl Feynman

PJ Feynman
Michelle Fineblum
Dave Fitzpatrick
Phyllis Fitzpatrick
Neil Friedband
Carrie Fuchs
Judy Gibian
Gary Girzon
Debbie Glass
Carol Glick
Lawrence Glick
Sylvia Glick
Ellen Glickman-Simon
Richard Glickman-Simon
Larry Goldberg
Rachel Goldner
Dan Goodman
Sandeep Green Vaswani
Sarah Green Vaswani
Jessica Greenfield
Judy Gross
John Harper
Maxine Haron
Larry Haydu
Linda Hirsch
Shirley Hui
Belinda Jentz
Cat Kaner
Gail Kazin
Jerry Kazin
Mari Keefe
David Daniel Klipper
Toby Kopman
Ann Kramer
Mitch Kramer

Marla Lewitus
Ricardo Lewitus
Benyamin Lichtenstein
Judith Lytel
Joan Makepeace
Laurie Margolies
Lee Mason
Pam McArthur
Ilan Mizrahi
Ruth Natanson
Andy Nierenberg
Jordan Oshlag
Jeff Pechet
Marjorie Pechet
Joel Perlmutter
Susan Phillips
Phil Posner
Marjorie Raskin
Susan Reich
Lizza Sandoe
Wendy Santis
Beth Schine
Carolyn Schwartz
Gail Shapiro
Helen Shik
Ashira Stevens
Janet Strassman-Perlmutter
Vivan Tseng
Roberta Unger
David Waldman
Sheila Watnick
Arlene Weiland
Marty Weiskoff
Roy Weltman