

Congregation Beth El Annual Meeting Minutes

April 14th, 2019

Call to Order: 9:15 AM – Quorum present

i. Invocation: (Rabbi Lobel)

First, I would like to thank everyone for coming together this morning for our annual meeting. It is so important for us to participate in this gathering, as we strive to do what's best for Congregation Beth El.

This meeting is an opportunity for us to reflect on the past year – its successes and its challenges. We have so much to be proud of, while we also recognize the continued need for improvement and renewal. In addition to thinking about our past, this meeting gives us a chance to discuss ideas for the future. In this moment of transition, decisions will need to be made regarding how we, as a community, move forward. This task belongs to all of us, each member of Congregation Beth El and we must all do our part.

Today, we are also charged with the task of voting on new lay leadership. We applaud those who have volunteered to serve and commend them for their commitment. May they serve wisely and diligently, bringing honor to the congregation. As we welcome new members to the Executive committee, we also give thanks to those who have served the congregation nobly as members of the Board of Directors. We appreciate all their efforts and we know they will continue to be active members of the synagogue community.

At this moment of reflection, visioning, and transition, we ask for God's guidance, as we pray – God, Source of Blessing, we come before You this morning in the spirit of partnership and unity. We are grateful for the ability to come together to work on behalf of Congregation Beth El. We ask that You bless us with wisdom, vision, perseverance, and fortitude as we move forward as a united community. May our work enable this synagogue to continue to be a center of Jewish life, a place where all are welcome, a place devoted to the highest ideals of our faith. Together we say, Amen.

ii. Approval of Annual Meeting Minutes 2018:

Motion made by Angie Perry, seconded by Jeff Wormser. Motion Passed

iii. Creating our Future Presentation: Michael Bersin presented the attached slide show presentation.

iv. Annual Budget: Richard Freidman presented the annual budget. (see attached slide show presentation)

v. Committee Report:

Fundraising Report: (Michael Cohen & Carol Cooper

Bites in Fort Bend initiated a new chapter in Fundraising for Congregation Beth El by including the Fort Bend community's participation. Twenty-two restaurants created and served samples of their cuisine to almost 400 guests. Competition was fierce for the People's Choice Awards in the categories of Best Appetizer, Entrée, and Dessert. The CBE décor committee selected the best restaurant display and all winners received a plaque to proudly display in their establishment. With enhanced publicity through social media, online newspapers and newsletters as well as congregants telling/inviting their friends, Bites in Fort Bend inaugural event received lots of attention. KPRC, channel 2 featured the event on the Sunday evening news. Congregation Beth El received wonderful community recognition.

Attendees, restaurants, and other community sponsors were very pleased and look forward to Bites in Fort Bend 2020. The synagogue netted almost \$13,000 from admission ticket sales, raffle basket ticket sales, and sponsorships. Michael Cohen graciously has agreed to chair the committee again next year.

Annual BEFTY Report: (Carolyn Wade)

This was my first year as BEFTY advisor. My goals were to assess the teens' and parents' wishes for the youth group and to implement those wishes. Both groups expressed a desire for clear communication, clear scheduling of programming, and follow-through for scheduled activities. The teens also asked for more fun and social activities. Parents requested and received scheduling updates and communication via email called BEFTY BAGEL BYTES; teens requested and received information via the Group Me App.

The calendar I set included one BEFTY meeting and/or Board Meeting per month and one social action or fun activity per month. We began the year with a parent and teen Havdallah at my home as a chance to socialize and discuss goals for the year. One of the first activities the teens engaged in after they chose their mascot (the bagel) was cleaning the BEFTY room to make it suitable as a hang out and meeting place, and we have held our meetings in that room since the cleanup. Other activities included an afternoon at the trampoline park, a Chanukah party, and a BEFTY Shabbat movie night. We have an Escape Room visit coming up soon and possibly Top Golf as well.

Our social action projects have been wonderful. BEFTY collected and delivered food items to the Ft. Bend Food Pantry, sorted toiletries to be distributed to families who have a loved one battling cancer, and participated in the Ft. Bend Interfaith MLK Day of Service (this included collecting socks and stationery for veterans, writing letters of gratitude to veterans, building beds for the homeless, and making lunches for the homeless). BEFTY also participated in NFTY events such as the Winter Conclave and Spring Kallah and organized and worked the annual BEFTY Purim Carnival at Beth El (BEFTY raised a little over \$500 from the carnival). We have an upcoming BEFTY Shabbat in May where the teens will lead the service and the installation of the new BEFTY Board will occur.

Goals for the 2019-20 school year include recruiting more teens from Ft. Bend to participate in BEFTY, coordinating social events with NFTY teens at other area synagogues, and improving BEFTY participation in NFTY events.

vi. President's Remarks (Yaffa Steubinger):

Serving as Beth El's president the past two years has truly been an honor. Taking on the responsibilities of the president was never on my bucket list but there was a need and I stepped up to help out the best I could. In fact, this is what Beth El is all about – people stepping up to help when they see a need.

Beth El is small but we do our best to act like a large synagogue by being an active congregation with events for people of all ages. For those who think we only offer Shabbat and High Holy Day services, here are a few things we've done this past year.

Monthly Shir Shabbats with dinner are always a favorite of our members. The Board works hard to make all events at Beth El budget neutral, which means we have to charge a small fee for the dinner. These special evenings are always well attended and we share a joyous community Shabbat dinner together every month! We've had special Shabbat services and one of my favorites was hearing our beloved Rocket Rosen share his thoughts on life with us. Another favorite was hosting Dr Joel Hoffman as our Scholar in Residence/Yom Limmud speaker. We had great turnouts for Shabbat service, Saturday morning Torah study, and a havdalah service lead by Joel. Joe Buchanan, a local Jewish singer, led us in a couple of special events and has created a Joe Buchanan fan club here at Beth El. We celebrated Sukkot in our new succah, designed by our own David Rosen.

There is no way I can list everybody who has helped out this past year but I will mention a few. As education chair, Ali Gratz introduced Family Havdalah events to bring religious school families and friends together for games, events, and more during the year. Our Religious School puts on a successful Shop and Schmooze event for Hanukah every year and our Preschool just had their annual Bunko fundraiser last night which was a blast! Despite a very busy schedule, member Carolyn Wade stepped up to

volunteer as our BEFTY youth advisor and she's done an awesome job! The teens like her and the parents adore her. Our AOA (Active Older Adults) senior group is like their name states - very active. They meet twice a month to have lunch together and to discuss current events. They also organize other special events throughout the year.

On Sunday mornings we've offered several adult education events. We had a well-attended presentation by Houston Jewish Funerals on how to prepare for a family member's funeral or your own. This is something you think about but really don't want to tackle so it was great to be able to offer our members this event. In fact, I'm all set now with a paid funeral and plot, something I didn't want my kids to have to deal with. Congregant George Starkschall taught a class on Jewish genealogy, and we had a class on learning Israel's history through its music, just to name a few events. We also had CPR/AED training for staff and members, and plan to have this every two years so we can all keep our certification up to date.

When Beth El needs volunteers, all we do is ask and they step up. For example, our Preschool needed volunteers to help clear out all of the small stones from the playground in order to lay a new foundation. They asked, volunteers of all ages showed up, and the job was done. In fact, we had a well-attended preschool playground dedication before Shabbat over a week ago. Our Temple Administrator, Norma Gonzales, and Finance Director, Erin Bersin, saw a need and decided to start the 'summer movie series.' Kids come for two hours to watch a movie, have snacks and get out of the Texas heat. The good news is they are ready to do this again starting June 13! We had women step up to continue the leadership of the Beth El Book Club as well as a special group of volunteers consistently representing our Jewish community with Lunches of Love.

The Rabbi continues to be involved with the Interfaith community and the annual Thanksgiving Interfaith Service. He's been teaching classes on the Talmud on Monday nights and he put together, in a short amount of time, a beautiful and meaningful 'Standing with Pittsburgh' service where he invited the interfaith community to join us. It was a very special and moving service.

What can I say about our most recent fundraiser, Bites in Fort Bend, and its chair, Michael Cohen, along with Carol Cooper and the BIFB committee? Everyone worked so hard on this event which is why it was so successful. We raised well over our \$10,000 goal! The restaurants and the Noah's event folks were very happy with the event. The restaurateurs and attendees cannot wait for our event to continue in 2020.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with my current Board. My presidency was so much easier with their constant involvement, input, ideas, work, and more. Carol Cooper is finishing her term as member at large as is Michelle Michener, our beloved Bylaws

Queen and secretary. They have done an awesome job!! So although we are small, we are mighty because of our community. We love having a Jewish presence here in Fort Bend and we are committed to keeping an active Jewish presence here.

Lori Palatnik, a Jewish speaker, educator and author I've heard several times in Houston, likes the quote "There are no problems, only opportunities for growth." She said that it gets her through almost everything. It means that God is sending her the situation so she can grow. It prevents her from blaming others, including herself. It frames a situation not as something overwhelming that is impossible to solve, but as a puzzle that can be worked out, and the process of working it out is where real growth takes place. Words are powerful; as soon as you reframe from "problem" to "opportunity," you pull down the covers, get out of bed, pull up your boot straps and rise to the occasion. No one wants problems, but who doesn't want opportunities? I look forward to working with our members on the new opportunities ahead for all of us here at Congregation Beth El.

vii. Nominations of Officers/Election of Officers:

The nominating committee submits the following list of nominees for presentation at the 2019 annual congregational meeting:

President: Michael Bersin
Vice President - Education: Michele Croft
Vice President – Administration (one year): Barb Zack
Secretary: open
Member-at-Large, Position 1: Mark Shapiro

The officer slate was presented. There were no nominations from the floor.

Motion to accept the slate by acclamation:

Motion made by Irene Helsinger, seconded by Sharon Shapiro. The slate was approved.

- viii. Presentation of Gavel & Introduction of new Board President
- ix. New Board of Trustees Presidents' Remarks – Michael Bersin accepted the gavel and thanked the congregation.
- x. Old Business: None
- xi. New Business: None

xii. Good & Welfare:

- Darrell's And Joy Caraway welcome Cora Elizabeth Wright. Darrell's great granddaughter
- Please join us for the Farewell Shabbat Service for Rabbi Lobel and Family – Friday June 14th @ 7:00 pm

xiii. Closing Benediction: (Rabbi Lobel) Our God, we have come to the conclusion of this annual convocation. We are thankful for this time together and we know it was time well spent. May our synagogue be strengthened by our efforts. As we depart from this place, let us remember our shared responsibility for the future vibrancy of our congregation and recognize our ability to make a difference. May this day and all days be ones dedicated to Your service. Together we say, Amen.

xiv. Adjournment: Meeting Adjourned at 10:57 am.

Respectively submitted by,

Michelle Michener, CBE Board Secretary

Attachment: Creating a Future Power point