

The Semi-Annual Meeting of Beth El Synagogue Center commenced via live Zoom on December 16, 2020 at 7:34 PM.

David Schechter and family light Hannukah candles.
Dvar Torah: Rabbi David Schuck.

Good and Welfare:

Joyce Goldklang raised the motion to approve the minutes. Hy Pryluck seconded the motion. Minutes were approved unanimously.

Rob Patchen: Presents the Chai Awards to members of 18 years.

Presidents Report: Mark Silver:

The Pandemic: One can view Beth El as having gone through four phases during the pandemic.

The First Phase was shutting down our physical environment and providing support for the physical, spiritual, psychological, and programmatic needs of the community.

The Second Phase involved re-opening to a limited extent and was viewed as the back together phase although we really aren't all back together. At this point we restarted the daily minyan and Shabbat morning services.

Nearly 200 people participated in one way or another, such as calling congregants via the phone tree, providing one-to-one support, and serving on task forces to enable the reopening the Shul. There was tremendous effort by the professional staff, clergy, and the congregants. What has gotten us through the 9-1/2 months were these efforts, and we are acknowledging that what these individuals all did made a difference. While reluctant to name names given how many people contributed, the congregation is entitled to know who the key players were. Our medical sub-task force (MSTF) comprised Rochelle Chaiken (chair), Talia Swartz, Elise Schepp, Marjorie Seidenfeld, Brian Bosworth, Mike Sacks, and Marilyn Russell.

Julie Rockowitz developed a Camp Reimagined for the summer and Dr. Marc Wager served as Medical Consultant. Out of about 100 campers, there was not a single positive COVID-19 case. While the camp did not make the substantial contribution to our revenue that it normally does, it did cover our sunk costs and that was a substantial financial achievement. Most importantly. It provided much needed fun for the children and maintained contact with our camp families.

Ronnie Becher and Shery Rosenstein (with medical advisors Dr. Mike Sacks and Dr. Gayle Salama) developed an in-person Nursery School (NS) program that involved extensive efforts to provide a meaningful and safe experience. The feedback we received has been excellent. We have about 2/3 the normal enrollment in the NS proper, but we added a kindergarten such that

our total more than exceeds last year's enrollment. We have an extensive and complex set of potential refunds should we be required to go on hiatus, developed with the help of Barbara Cohen, GERALYNN REIFER, and Oliver Vogel.

Bekkah Gold and Stephanie Lederman developed a hybrid model for the Religious School.

Making our High Holiday plans was very challenging. Through the Westchester Jewish Council and METNY USCJ as well as one-on-one contacts with other synagogues we exchanged ideas with lots of other synagogues, all of which were struggling as we were. Many, if not most, non-Orthodox synagogues that we were in touch with did not have face-to-face services. We were guided by two principles: safety (abundance of caution, acceptable level of risk) and meeting as best we could congregant needs, with safety always taking precedence. We reached three early conclusions:

- a. We needed to offer both virtual and live experiences—this created great pressure on clergy, staff, and volunteers.
- b. We needed to offer High quality and meaningful experience to deliver to members
- c. We needed to offer different experiences, rather than just livestreaming the live service as many synagogues did.

We settled on High-Quality Pre-Produced Online Services and In-Person Tent Services. We received very positive feedback on the online experience. Special thanks go to Alan Kellman, Brian Bosworth, and David Shechter along with Erica Leventhal and Jack Klebanow in addition to our clergy team of Rabbis Schuck, Sitkin, and Fisher and Cantor Schwartz.

Phase Three: Maintaining the status quo. Making our processes more routine, and adjusting to the new normal. We have upgraded our livestream capabilities and we are looking to upgrade our IT infrastructure. We have received an anonymous donor to contribute to our infrastructure items for IT.

Now we are experiencing a Fourth Phase of this pandemic as we have encountered a surge. Because our systems were no longer serving us in this new environment—they were too cumbersome and not sufficiently responsive—we have moved to a new decision-making process driven by a small team known as the “Central Assessment Response Decision (“CARD”) Team comprised of Erica Leventhal, Rabbi Schuck, Rob Patchen, Brian Bosworth, Andy Collins, and Mark Silver. The process of course includes consultation with the Senior Staff and the Officers.

Making these decisions is never easy. We feel an immense responsibility. We act out of an abundance of caution for the safety of the community and with an abundance of concern, as well, for the emotional and spiritual needs of our community. This is the current status of in-person activity:

- a. The Nursery School meets daily, Monday through Friday.
- b. We are now closed to walk in traffic. If you need to drop something off or pick up; please do so at the front security desk.

- c. We are re-assessing our various policies and procedures regarding Daily Minyan and Shabbat Morning Services, always following and taking into account New York State guidelines and the CDC.
- d. Some staff are working in the building on a limited basis. On relatively rare occasions there are meetings of staff with congregants or vendors by appointment
- e. Religious school and youth engagement went virtual once New Rochelle closed its schools.

We have difficult days ahead of us, but Mark Silver is confident that we are going to be strong and resilient.

Questions from the floor? No questions.

B'Yachad Campaign:

Hila Reichman: co-chair of the campaign with Sam Berger, presented:

Would like to thank the most thoughtful and dedicated committee and wanted to give gratitude to: Barbara Cohen, Gary Claar, Ellen Gelboim, Lynn Keltz, Marc Klee, Jenny Longman, Harriet Suvall, Jeff Swarz, and Michael Goldstein.

In addition, we could not have done this alone: Rabbi Schuck and Rabbi Sitkin who also stepped in to help us exceed our goals.

We raised \$680k for the shul through the B'Yachad Campaign; last year's Kol Nidre appeal raised \$280k.

We are hoping that with year-end gifts, we will be closer to \$700k. We should celebrate this accomplishment, and this will help us to be on more stable financial footing. Hearts are open and people gave what they could. Thank you to all for making this campaign such a success.

Senior staffing Changes: HR Update: Erica Leventhal:

It is often bittersweet when we have to say goodbye to beloved staff members. As you know, Bekkah Gold and Abby Wise are both leaving Beth El to pursue exciting next steps in their professional careers. Bekkah has joined the leadership team at the Jewish Education Project and Abby is enrolling in a masters program to earn her degree in the field of social work. Both Bekkah and Abby have expressed many times how connected they feel to Beth El and our members, and how much Beth El has enabled them to grow in their professional roles throughout the years.

We will be planning a more appropriate "see you later" event when conditions allow, but Erica used this opportunity to say a few words of gratitude and appreciation to her colleagues and friends.

Abby began at Beth El as the Program Coordinator and became the Assistant Executive Director in the beginning of 2018. Abby is a team player and has been my right-hand and go-to collaborator for nearly a decade. She has had a profound impact on our programming, internal systems and congregational communications. She was a constant sounding board for me and I admire the energy and dedication in which she approached each project. Abby is a friendly face and a compassionate ear, going above and beyond not only for Beth El, but for our members in areas of their lives that are completely unrelated to the shul. I am grateful for Abby's assistance, partnership and patience over the years. I know you will all join me in wishing Abby all the best as she starts this next chapter.

Bekkah Gold has made an incredible impact in her various roles at Beth El, most recently as the Director of Youth and Family Engagement. She has made great strides in both enhancing our Religious School and creating an engaging and active youth community, building strong relationships with kids and parents throughout. Bekkah has infused our school, youth community and congregation at large with a love of Judaism and Israel through innovative approaches. She has worked tirelessly, and has succeeded, in creating a community that our teens cherish. Bekkah has already transitioned to a part time role, continuing as the Director of our Religious School and will remain overseeing our school through the end of the school year. On a personal note, I have known Bekkah since she was a young teenager. I was the Director of Youth Activities at the time and Bekkah and I had a close connection as she often was a teen helper in the youth office. Her smile and energy were infectious back then just as much as they are now. I watched Bekkah grow into a mature young adult, we kept in touch through college as she attended Binghamton, my alma mater, and when I had the privilege with Beth El's lay leadership, of hiring Bekkah for a full time role on our senior team, it was so gratifying and heartwarming to see that same young teen now around the same table as both a respected colleague and friend. I know my own children and family, along with so many other families in our community, have benefited from Bekkah's care, passion and leadership. I know we all are excited to see what Bekkah's future successes will be as she starts this new journey.

We are sad to see both Abby and Bekkah go, but we feel enriched by their presence and contributions to our community that we will continue to build on. We hope, and know, that they will remain connected to Beth El and we will be able to share in their professional journeys going forward.

When staff members leave, this presents an opportunity for Beth El to take a thorough look at our overall organizational structure, assess our current needs and consider how we can build our team to meet the needs of our community. And if 2020 has taught us anything, it is that the best plan includes a flexible approach that enables us to be fluid and ready to manage whatever challenges and opportunities may come our way.

With Abby and Bekkah's imminent departure at the end of the calendar year, although Bekkah will be staying on part-time through the remainder of the school year, the big question is, what happens January 1.

First, Mark Seidenfeld and Jessica Berman, both members of the Human Resources (HR) committee were tasked with doing a full review of our current staffing structure, including interviews with the staff and clergy and thoughtful discussions about many different scenarios

and options. A proposal was presented to HR and the Officers, in consultation with our Audit and Finance Committee with regard to budget. The proposal outlined how we can best meet our staffing needs as we go forward. Mark and Jessica were asked for the proposal to include options of hiring new staff (part-time or full-time), utilizing staff we have, or some combination of the two. This was an enormous undertaking that was done efficiently and expeditiously. I want to publicly thank Mark and Jessica for their time and effort.

OK. So now, what is going to happen January 1?

Beginning January 1, through June 30th, the remainder of this fiscal year:

- Bekkah will be staying on part-time through the school year
- we will begin search for a part-time Director of Youth and Family Engagement with the goal for this person to start ASAP in order to benefit from transition
- we will begin search for a part-time Program Support Coordinator
- Rabbi Fisher will be taking over the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Experience in the interim
- Rabbi Sitkin and Rabbi Fisher will be overseeing different areas of programming with program design coordination with the senior team
- groups requiring tech support will be supported by administrative staff and additional help that we will hire on an as needed basis
- existing staff including Stephanie Lederman, Marilyn Russel, Alise Liquorie, Zoe Raynes and Jade, will take on additional responsibilities as well

What will happen on July 1?

Lay leadership, HR and Audit and Finance, along with Erica Leventhal and Rabbi Schuck are diligently at work on planning for July 1. There are many variables to consider and again, we are looking to meet our overall needs in the best way possible and work within our budget. Rabbi Fisher and Cantor Schwartz have quickly become important parts of our community and we are beginning conversations with both of them about the possibility of continuing at Beth El and expanding their roles as we move into the 2021 fiscal year on July 1 and going forward. We are hopeful that they will both remain members of our clergy team.

We remain in uncertain and unprecedented times. There is no rule book of how to lead a synagogue community through a pandemic. The plan is still being formed and details have yet to be finalized. As soon as we have more information, we will communicate that with the congregation at large. Please know, your President, Mark Silver, the officers, the lay leaders on HR and A&F and various other committees, along with all of the staff and clergy, are working so hard, each and every day, to make the best possible decisions for our Beth El family; decisions that keep us safe, healthy, connected, engaged, religiously enriched, and spiritually uplifted WHILE maintaining the operational and financial viability of our beloved Beth El. These are not easy times, and we are faced with many difficult decisions. We always welcome constructive feedback, suggestions and I and the leadership are always happy to answer your questions as best we can. The only thing we ask is that the congregation join us in this hard work by offering a spirit of generosity and benefit of the doubt. We are all on the same team and want the very best for Beth El. It is the underlying strength, dedication and commitment of all of you, and of our community at large, that will continue to help us all persevere.

Questions from the floor? No questions.

Treasurer Report: Barbara Cohen:

Barbara presented the year-end accounts from last fiscal year – July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020.

Despite the pandemic which started in March, she reported that last fiscal year ended well but it is this current fiscal year that faces the most uncertainty around the pandemic.

METRICS:

MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS:

Membership numbers have been on a gradual decline each year (historically losing an average of 20 members pa).

Focus is on full paying members:

First column (Blue) is actuals from year ending Jun 30 2019; we ended that year with 563 full members.

Second column (Green) is last fiscal year ending Jun 30 2020- We budgeted to lose 18 members based on previous trends, but we ended the year with 558 full members – a net loss of only (5) full members.

In the current fiscal year (last two columns), we budgeted for a worst-case scenario of 20% loss of membership (which would've equated to about 115 members) due to the uncertainty of the pandemic, and ytd thru 11/30/20 we have 533 full members – a net loss of only 25 members. That is higher than previous years but much less than budgeted. That said, I am fairly confident our loss will be closer to 5% (about 30) rather than the 20% we budgeted.

YOUTH AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:

Year ending June 2019 we had 98 students in the religious school; last year we had 109 students, and this year we are down to 70 students. (down 39 students)- primarily because it is hybrid but mostly virtual classes.

NURSERY SCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN:

Year ending June 2019 we had 72 nursery school students; last year we had 61 and though we budgeted for a worst-case scenario with an entirely virtual (remote learning) nursery school with only 18 students, we now have 44 enrolled in nursery school and new this year - 2 kindergarten classes with 19 students – total of 63 students.

DAY CAMP:

As you will recall the day camp is historically one of our biggest sources of revenue each year. In the year ended June 2019 (summer of 2018), we had 269 campers and last year (Summer 2019) we had a record number of 273 campers. This past summer due to the pandemic we did not have our traditional camp program but we had a Camp Reimagined – with 93 students. It was successful in the sense that the children were safe and we were able to keep our camp families engaged, but surely did not make the profits we are used to.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

Barbara presented the financial statements from last year – as a reminder, these are year-end accounts from July 1 2019-Jun 30 2020.

First column(yellow) is budget; second column (green) is actuals as of 6/30/20 and third column (blue) is variance between budget vs actual. I will now point out some of the highlights from the year:

Dues and associated costs (building fund assessments and extra seats) were \$40k better than budget primarily due to having less resignations than expected.

Fundraising (kol nidre and general donations) was better by \$44k vs budget

Day Camp profit was better by \$33k vs budget (NOTE: last year, we made a profit of \$623k in the day camp; as I mentioned earlier, since we weren't able to have our traditional camp this past summer due to the pandemic, this created a huge loss to our bottom line. We essentially broke even (and covered our sunk costs) with our Camp Reimagined which was a great result under the circumstances).

Nursery School profit was down by (\$74k) vs budget as we had fewer students than we had anticipated; also had to issue some tuition refunds due to the pandemic.

YFE was better by \$51k because we received an unanticipated youth grant and had some savings in personnel and programming costs.

Marketing and Communications costs were better by \$57k as we had savings in personnel costs (marketing coordinator hired 6 months later than planned) and less money was spent on publicity.

Building maintenance expenses were better by \$131k due to savings in personnel costs, **receipt of a rebate from Con Edison** and savings in snow removal and refuse due to partial closing of the building due to pandemic

Security fees were better than budget by \$55k due to savings from partial closing of building due to pandemic and better collection of security fees than expected

Admin costs were greater than budget by \$29 due to an additional requirement in accountant's review and less bulletin revenue than anticipated

In summary we ended the year better than budget by \$350k, which we moved to our Reserves/General fund. This was very helpful as it is this surplus along with a prior year surplus and the PPP (paycheck protection program) money (\$482,000) we received which helped close our budget gap for this current year. We budgeted for a worst-case scenario this year because of all of the uncertainty. Without these surpluses and the PPP, we could've had a deficit of close to \$1million.

Year-to-date, Barbara stated she is cautiously optimistic about our financials, primarily due to the success of the B'Yachad campaign and membership numbers being better than anticipated due to the pandemic.

These are final numbers – our independent accountants have reviewed these financial statements and they are in conformity with GAAP – generally accepted accounting principles.

If anyone is interested in seeing the full report, it is available in the office of the Executive Director for your review.

Nominating Committee:

Nominations for Members of the Congregation to serve on the committee

We open the floor for nominations:

Rob Patchen nominates Serge Malka: he has agreed to serve if elected

Lauren Freeman Bosworth nominates Mike Frankel: he has agreed to serve

Ellen Barlis nominates Ryan Enis: he has agreed to service

Debbie Young nominates Bruce Gold: he has agreed to serve.

Three people to serve on the committee and one alternate.

Virtual poll sent to all members are able to vote.

Results of the Virtual vote for the members of the congregation who will serve on the nominating committee: Bruce Gold, Mike Frankel, and Serge Malka with Ryan Enis as an alternate.

Meeting adjourned at 9:09PM.

Happy Hannukah.