

Beth El Climate and Sustainability Resolution December 2019

Background

We are guided by the teachings of our tradition that humanity has the responsibility to care for Creation:

וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת־הָאָדָם וַיְנַחֵהוּ בְּגַן־עֵדֶן לְעַבְדָּהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ:

The Eternal G-d took the human and placed him in the garden of Eden, to work it and protect it.
(Gen. 2:15)

As climate change and environmental degradation threaten humans and other species across the world for generations to come, Congregation Beth El is obligated to speak up and take action. As a Jewish community, our core values lead us to understand that climate change, environmental injustice, habitat destruction, resource depletion, species extinction, and other human-caused ecological disasters are urgent spiritual and moral crises. The climate crisis before us may be existential and permanent, leaving our children and grandchildren with the legacy of our collective abuse of our shared natural world and built environment.

Our tradition requires us to minimize waste (*bal tashchit* / בל תשחית), to limit our impact and respect the Earth as a divine gift (Lev. 25 & Ps. 24), and to ensure that future generations can thrive upon it *l'dor vador* / לדור ודור.

Resolved:

The Board of Directors of Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley recognizes the urgent call to action by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and pledges sustained support for congregational efforts to reduce our collective environmental footprint while honoring individual circumstances and to stand for climate justice consistent with our traditions. The Board urges the congregation to:

- Establish goals and an action plan for reducing the greenhouse gas emissions of Beth El's building and operations that reflects the values of this resolution and the global goals;
- Educate and assist congregants to reduce the environmental footprint and greenhouse gas emissions impact of our homes, workplaces, means of transportation, and other daily activities in a manner that honors individual circumstances, skills, limitations, and blessings; and
- Support advocacy and awareness efforts to advance the goals of this Climate and Sustainability resolution as a congregation and in our broader communities in defense of Creation and a livable resilient world.

Recommended Congregation Actions

General

- Form a climate green team that includes youth, Beth El elders, etc. This team will maintain a climate webpage and keep the congregation informed about its actions.
- Pass board resolution (above) that both symbolizes and exemplifies our congregational commitment to caring for the earth.

Temple Building, Grounds and Operations

- Sign up for Town of Sudbury electric aggregation to purchase 100% renewable power
- Conduct an energy audit & calculate the carbon footprint of the building and its operations.
- Implement cost-effective actions to reduce energy use identified by the audit that might include:
 - Improve HVAC controls so as to condition only those rooms in use
 - Identify air leaks and sealing them via weather-stripping and caulking; and
 - Complete replacement of incandescent lights with LED lighting
- Explore options for replacing the current heating and cooling equipment with high-efficiency alternatives
- Continue to explore solar opportunities for the building roof or parking lot
- Explore opportunities for solar electricity development partnerships with other religious institutions in our community.
- Increase the number, visibility, and signage of recycling bins in the building
- Explore how to reduce plastic use, e.g., by using our small kiddush and grape juice glasses and our non-paper plates on a regular basis
- Explore use of compostable plates and utensils and ability to send them to an anaerobic digester facility service
- Establish onsite or subscribe to a composting service and work toward zero waste events
- Donate unused food to local shelters, agricultural operations, and composting facilities, as appropriate and available
- Plant bee and butterfly-friendly flowers
- Use no herbicides and pesticides that are harmful to human or other animal life
- Start or affiliate with a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program

Education

- Develop environmental educational programming, including specifically Jewish bases for environmental stewardship and justice, for every age group, in both the religious school and other venues, in partnership with staff & the Youth and Family Education committee
- Develop Green B'nei Mitzvah options

Religious

- Include prayers and readings about the earth and our obligation to care for it in worship services
- Include prayers and readings about environmental justice in worship services and learning opportunities

Support Activities to Assist Congregants with Individual or Household Actions

Host a congregation information meeting on climate change

- Set a percentage goal of enlisting congregants to sign a pledge that requires improving sustainability practices in their homes and lives in general;
- Adopt the MassEnergize software platform (www.massenergize.org) to engage congregants to take action on climate change, allow congregants to see all the actions they can take (energy efficiency, solar, food, waste, clean cars, transportation alternatives, advocacy, etc.), find good local service providers, connect with others at Beth El who have done similar work, track how many households have taken action and what's been done.
- Organize member-to-member information and coaching support for those considering replacing fossil fuel heating systems (oil, natural gas-fired furnaces) on options for purchasing residential solar, heat pumps. Participate in advocacy opportunities at the municipal, state, and/or federal levels. This can be done in conjunction with the www.massenergize.org platform and in collaboration with other MassEnergize communities (Wayland, Concord, etc.)
- Promote transportation alternatives to automobiles, e.g., walking, biking, public/shared transit), as available and appropriate.
- Promote carsharing, carpooling and vanpooling for religious school, services, and other congregational activities
- Promote shift to hybrid and electric cars;
- Explore potential for tapping state and utility resources funding installation of EV charging stations at Beth El and in our communities.

Advocacy

- Continue and deepen participation with JCAN (www.jewishclimate.org)
- Join Greenfaith (www.greenfaith.org)
 - Seek the Greenfaith Energy Shield certification
- Co-sponsor climate-change mitigation activities with other houses of worship
- Encourage adoption of climate-change mitigation measures by our local communities
- Co-sponsor advocacy activities at the town, state, and/or federal levels