National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut

September 2019 Board Meeting Minutes

Called to Order: 11:00 AM

NFB Pledge

Roll call: Rene, Joe, Marchele, Charlie, Gary, Honorata, Marilyn, Esther, Rob, Phil, Beth, Josefina, Nathanael, Maryanne, Mary, Jim

Secretary’s Report amendment (accepted): regarding insufficient amount of BESB eye doctors and subsequent vision evaluations

Treasurer’s Report:

Checking Account Balance: $17823.20

Savings Account Balance: $52534.27

General Funds (Liquid Assets): $34934.05

Restricted Funds: $35423.42

Blackford Fund (Newsline partnership with BESB and outreach (: $1506

Cummins Scholarship Fund (for TVI): $12053.93, will be able to award $2500 to scholarship recipient

Rodney Demarest Scholarship Fund: $7874.05, fund should cover this year and next even without further donations

Higley Fund: $269.95 contribution to fund scholarship again

Bruce Woodward Scholarship Fund: $1200, donations mostly come from outreach to previous scholarship winners

Leftover funds from 2016 BELL Program: $3853.02, saving for future Bell Program

Paul Duquette Technology Fund: $2998.94

At Large Chapter: $159.50

Waterbury Chapter: $218.05

Connecticut Association of Blind Students: $398.92

Connecticut Association of Guide Dog Users: $685.04

Connecticut Association of Blind Merchants: $20, not too active, could take money back into the affiliate funds

Southwest Chapter: $128.19

Shoreline Chapter: $421.97

Hartford Chapter: $226.05

State Convention Sponsorships: $2350

Holding assets of East of the River Chapter: $1084.83

* General funds over the past 5 months have increased from $20000
* Fundraising has not tapered off
* Solicitation letters by local chapters have been very successful
* Income is currently stable
* Income from fundraising has been $30000 since April, $50000 since January
* Subsidies for Washington Seminar and National Convention ranged from about $15000 to $20000 in the past
* Due to limited subsidies and smaller amounts for National Convention specifically, this year’s subsidies only accounted for $10000
* The cost associated with an Outreach director was approximately $50000 to $60000
* Lucia working from home instead of an office space has cut the cost to about $25000 a year, including salary, internet and telephone
* State convention expenses should be about what they were in past years
* Recommendation to increase investment in seminar and national convention subsidies or financial support at state convention
* Recommendation to use general funds to top off Bruce Woodward scholarship
* Note in the Constitution about how if a chapter is closed for 2 or more years, the funds of the chapter are then subject to the general fund
* Motion accepted to use general funds to top off Bruce Woodward Fund in order to award a $2500 scholarship and cover the recipient’s convention expenses
* Concern raised about NFB membership status of scholarship recipients
* Scholarships are party designed specifically to bring new young members into the organization, as demonstrated by National
* Description of scholarship recommendation process at both state and national level

Reports:

DOORS-BESB Report: Beth and Mary

* Budget appears to be stable until 2022
* Job opening for mobility instructor
* Name change to Department of Aging and Disabilities
* Openings on SRC (policy planning with Brian Sigman) and Advisory Commission (policy adjustments and revisions)
* Even though you are appointed by a government body, your interests can still reflect the views of the NFB
* Deb Reed is actively being appointed to the SRC
* Brian Sigman will be funding Newsline through next year

PAC Plan and Dream Maker Circle: Honorata

PAC Plan

* \* Monthly donations that benefit the national NFB office
* Connecticut is 45th place in the list of overall state by state contribution amounts
* Encourage individual and chapter donations of a minimum of $5 a month
* Three individuals have signed on
* Hartford signed on for $15 a month
* Southwest Chapter signed on for $10 a month
* Connecticut Affiliate joined PAC Plan at $25 a month
* Please notify Honorata if you are an individual who signed on so that she can keep track of numbers

Dream Maker Circle:

* Designate a portion of what you would like to leave behind upon your passing to the NFB
* Adding NFB to your insurance policy
* Creating a special bank account

Newsline: Gary

* Capability to download content of Newsline onto Voice Dream in order to listen to audio input other than voiceover on the iPhone
* Newsline can be enabled on Alexa as well
* Could be helpful to use the money not spent on Newsline to provide training for NFB members to use the app itself
* Possibly provide training at state convention
* Interest in putting a copy of the Federationist on Newsline
* Suggestion of emailing Scott White and ask if he can post important announcements to our Connecticut Newsline channel
* If chapter members do not have the technology to access Newsline or the Connecticut list serve, it is advisable for the chapter president to update his or her members directly
* For members who require hard copies of the material, Lucia sends out those packets
* Suggestion for Jim to contact chapter presidents when he receives national legislative alerts to relay the information
* Suggestion to create a legislative committee
* Suggestion to plan monthly chapter president calls starting in October
* Can register for state convention using regular word document, paper mail, or Google Form

Report from First-Time National Convention Attendee: Marilyn

* Message from fellow visually impaired members that “I am not alone.”
* Great sense of community
* Explored the Independence Market
* Enjoyed general session
* Wished she had more mentorship and was better informed
* Hoped that alternates could be chosen if first-time scholarship awardees could not attend national convention
* Note to stay in contact with board members for support and guidance
* National convention was unusually expensive
* Suggestion to hold a conference call with all Connecticut national convention attendees a month before national convention

Outreach: Phil

* “If Honorata and I can do this, so can you.”
* Attended a series of about 10 different meetings over 3 weeks, not all disability-related, to network and talk about the NFB
* Talked to various supermarkets about disability rights and better serving blind customers, helped develop policy and accessible systems
* Met with mayor or first selectman to become involved with their ADA or accessibility committee
* Let your voice be heard
* Educated emergency response teams
* Provided resources to the local Board of Education
* Golf Clinic to raise awareness
* Get involved by joining advisory boards and non-profits
* Extend your reach through creative means
* Explore your network and foster relationships
* Show interest in other causes so that others may help you in turn
* Place value on money so that others may be more willing to give it
* Contact Phil or Honorata for ideas
* Social media outreach
* Bring image descriptions to the table
* If you notice an access barrier, speak up, stand for fellow blind individuals

State Convention Updates:

* Aira will be free and available all weekend at the hotel
* Marchelle identified someone to speak the invocation on Saturday morning
* Shonda identified someone to speak the invocation before Saturday night’s banquet
* Expanded breakfast on Sunday morning starting at 8:00 AM
* Silver City serves breakfast starting at 7:00 AM
* Board meeting from 9:00 AM to noon
* Maryanne to run board elections
* Maryanne will be asking for changes to our Constitution
* The Constitution must be read first the day before, and then voted upon
* Amendment to update receiving date for affiliate dues to January 31st
* Amendment for removing age limit for NFB membership (age limit was previously 16 and older)

Miscellaneous:

* Volunteer for vehicle donation: Marilyn
* Volunteer for At Large Chapter: suggestion to rotate the responsibility between leaders for the next year until a president can be established, will bring to attention at state convention
* Esther volunteered to lead October’s At Large chapter meeting
* October is Meet the Blind Month
* Will hold chapter presidents call early in October to discuss strategies for greater outreach
* Continue to look for sponsors for upcoming state convention

Meeting Adjourned: 1:45 PM