**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF CONNECTICUT**

**073121 Board Meeting Minutes**

10:05 Call to order

Board Members present

Maryanne Melley, Mary Silverberg, Nathanael Wales, Veronica Alston, Deb Reed, and Marchele Davis

NFB Pledge

Mary Silverberg made a motion and Marchele Davis seconded to accept the April Board meeting minutes. The motion was passed unanimously.

**TREASURER’S REPORT as of July 30, 2021**

Bank Accounts:

* Our available checking account balance is $97,856.22.
* Our available savings account balance is $52,561.52.

General and Restricted Funds:

* Our total general fund (liquid assets) is $109,128.94.
* Our total of restricted funds is $41,288.80. of these:
* $1,472.68 in the Blackford Fund
* $9,473.91 in the Cummins fund
* $9,175.35 in the Demarest fund, comfortably allowing us to award this scholarship this year and again in 2022. At the rate at which we receive donations, we can easily project to award this scholarship yet again in 2023.
* $4,334.95 in the Higley Fund
* $5,250.00 in the Betty and Bruce Woodward scholarship fund
* $3,412.02 in a fund for Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) Programs benefiting blind children in Connecticut, including the at-home edition this summer
* $1,935.19 in the NFB of CT Technology Fund
* $203.50 in a fund temporarily holding funds for the At-Large Chapter
* $162.05 in a fund temporarily holding funds for the Waterbury Chapter
* $921.86 in a fund holding funds for the CT Association of Blind Students
* $497.05 in a fund temporarily holding funds for the CT Association of Guide Dog Users
* $82.19 in a fund temporarily holding funds for the Southwest Connecticut Chapter. Final close out of the treasury has been completed, and the remaining balance will be held for the reestablishment of the chapter through December 5, 2023.
* $107.05 in a fund temporarily holding funds for the Hartford Chapter
* $1,761.00 in state convention sponsorships
* $2,500 in a restricted fund holding the funds to be awarded by the Zukowski Family Foundation Scholarship

As I have stated over the past few months, we should expect some decrease in fundraising income during the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impacts, and we have begun to see such a decrease albeit slight. Our General Fund has actually continued to grow but at about half the rate as this period in 2019. Finally, our General Fund has now received the funds from the sale of the car bequeathed to us. These were $6,000; it is standard practice that we will in turn donate 50% of these to the National organization, and I would make and support a motion to do so.

Vote on sending $3,000.00 of $6,000.00 car sale to National. Nathanael Wales made a motion. Deb Reed seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Department of Aging and Disability Services** ADS and Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind BESB minutes only. [**ABPVI-Minutes-6-17-2021.doc**](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/AgingandDisability/BOARDS/ABPVI-Minutes-6-17-2021.doc)

Brian Sigman is retiring on October 1st. The NFB of CT would like a say on who will be replacing him.

**SRC-** Deb Reed- BESB field employees are back as of June 1st. Employees are back in the office as of July 1st. If you are looking for adult services email Christopher Lassen and cc Brian Sigman to get the best result. BESB and other surrounding states have applied for an innovation fund grant to be used for internships and employment. The DOT will provide free Aira to its clients using public transportation. This includes ADA rides.

**PAC Plan**-Len Schlenk was unable to join the meeting.

**BCAC** – (BESB Consumer Advisory Committee)-No Report

**The Federationist**. Brianna Rigsbee would like articles submitted by myself, Division and Chapter presidents about members that they feel should be highlighted. She will let members know when articles are due.

**BELL Academy 2021**-Kristen Dockendorf reported that this year’s home edition is much better than last year. This is most likely due to the fact that last year was the first time national tried a Home Edition. This year featured different levels of Braille efficacy which made the groups smaller and the activities more meaningful. Kristen may be getting a donation to our BELL Academy for next year.

**Birdies for Charity-**Mary Silverberg reported that due to new strategies of asking members to reach out to family and friends and putting the Birdies information into our regular donation mailings for the month of June, $2,444.55 was raised this year which includes the 15% added from Travelers. Mary also said she and Joe would run the program again next year. Thank you, Mary, and Joe, for doing such a wonderful job! Chirp, Chirp.

**Marchele Davis** informed the board that she will no longer be able to serve as our state secretary. This was sad news to hear but with her overwhelming work schedule we all understood. We all thanked her for her service, and she stated that she would like to remain a part of the board if possible

**2021 State Convention** Principles of Engagement were discussed and who would be on the subcommittee. A motion was made by Deb Reed and seconded by Mary Silverberg to accept the Principals of Engagement and it passed unanimously. Nathanael Wales, Mary Silverberg, and Veronica Alston volunteered to be on the sub committee with Nathanael as the chair.

**National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut Proposed 2021 State Convention Principles of Engagement**

These principles of engagement were adopted by the National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut Board of Directors on July 31st, 2021, for recommendation to the State Convention. Nothing in these rules of engagement is intended to change the Federation’s constitution. The Board of Directors and members in good standing and in attendance may participate in all convention discussions as a matter of right. Any member of the NFB of CT may make or second motions [and] propose nominations.” These procedures simply implement the method for following the constitution in a hybrid convention.

The principles and procedures below are intended to provide clarity and advance notice on how the convention will be managed in 2021. They are consistent with practices used in previous hybrid conventions. This document will be read at the NFB of CT Opening Ceremonies on October 30th and then a second time on October 31st at the Business Meeting. Those eligible to vote on this proposal will be any enrolled voter present and voting at Business Meeting on October 31st as described below.

“A subcommittee of the board of directors comprising those who are not standing for election this year shall deal with questions and issues of credentials for voting. The subcommittee will include Nathanael Wales, Mary Silverberg, and Veronica Alston. Nathanael Wales shall chair the subcommittee.”

**Voting**

* 1. To be eligible to vote at the 2021 Convention, individuals must be registered to vote no later than October 15, 2021.
  2. Be active members in good standing of the National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut either through the affiliate, State division, State Chapter or as a Member at-Large at the state level having paid dues for 2021.
  3. Provide a phone number to be used for voting purposes.

1. The subcommittee or Lucia Lee will validate the list of eligible voters based upon the above criteria by October 15, 2021. The vetting process will include verification that the individual was a member in good standing prior to October 15, 2021, according to the state membership database. Any individuals who register to vote through the state convention registration but are not listed as active members will be contacted via email and offered an opportunity to provide proof of membership. If no email is given at the time of registration, the phone number provided for voting purposes will be used to communicate. The final list of eligible voters for the 2021 convention will be considered final on October 15, 2021. No exceptions will be made for members who fail to register to vote at the convention by October 15, 2021.
2. All individuals who are members in good standing in 2021, registered for the convention, and provided a valid phone number for voting purposes will constitute the pool of convention voters. “This includes members who will be voting virtually and in person.”
3. All voting will be done via phone.
4. Any matter must receive 51 percent support of the votes cast by the convention voters present and voting in order to be affirmed.
5. Present and voting will mean the subset of convention voters who actually cast a vote on a given question. Thus, voters who are indifferent to a matter cannot block its consideration by the convention by choosing not to cast a vote.
6. All votes will be allocated two minutes for vote time.
7. After two minutes, if the outcome to the question under consideration is unclear, the chair will poll the Board of Directors not up for reelection by voice vote for a definitive outcome.
8. If voting indicates 75 percent support for or against a question prior to the two-minute period elapsing, the chair may elect to move to the next order of business.
9. An opportunity to practice voting will be offered in the convention on a question that has no impact on the policy of the organization.

Amendments to our State Constitution; Amendments were read at this board meeting and agreed that they would be sent out on the list serve. They will be available in large print and Braille, and on Zoom at our state convention for review prior to voting on Sunday, October 31st at our Business meeting.

**Article IX: AFFILIATION**

**Remove this portion: (NOTE: An amendment to the Constitution of the National Federation of the Blind was passed in July 1971, restricting the use of the name only to organizations so affiliated. However, we did not pass this amendment with the Constitution of the Connecticut Federation, and your President feels it should not be part of this State Constitution. This note is for reminder to us that such a restriction exists in the National Constitution.)**

**Add this: The name National Federation of the Blind, Federation of the Blind, or any variant thereof is the property of the National Federation of the Blind; and any affiliate, or local chapter or division of an affiliate, if it ceases to be a part of the National Federation of the Blind, (for whatever reason) shall forthwith forfeit the right to use the name National Federation of the Blind, Federation of the Blind, or any variant thereof.**

**Article XI: Dues**

**Remove this portion: A life-time membership may be secured for a fee of $100.00. A person must be a paid member at least fifteen (15) days in advance of a state convention to be able to vote at said convention.**

**State Convention**-We have confirmed 13 speakers at this time and are working on several more. Speakers will be a combination of in person and virtual. We will no longer have heavy appetizers on Friday night do to Covid concerns. The Convention Committee will speak with the hotel about having food stations where someone will serve us. We will also be requesting the same for breakfast. We want to make sure everyone is safe and there is no touching of food by members. We recommend masks be worn if you are vaccinated. We will require masks be worn if you are not vaccinated. Lucia will have masks available at check in. Jim Cronin, president of the AT Large chapter is organizing a variety show for Friday night. He is encouraging members to have family and friends join in the fun. There will be a keyboard available and microphone. Feel free to tell a joke, read poetry, play music, sing a song, or do what ever you like. This is a fun, relaxing evening before a busy Saturday starts at 8:00am. Please call 860-257-6000 now to make your room reservations. Mention you are with the NFB of CT Convention. Rooms must be booked by October 6th, so please don’t wait until the last minute. Thank you.

**The Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped** is not closing. The staff is moving to Middletown do to budget cuts. Gordon has retired but there will be a new Director replacing him.

Jim Cronin and Len Schlenk had discussed an affiliate get together on September 18th in Wilton. Jim had done a lot of research into how he could get everyone to the YMCA park. However, the cost of a Greyhound bus was $3,314.54. Although the board loved the idea of everyone getting together the cost of the bus and the timing of the event being six weeks before our state convention led us to recommend the outing be put off until next spring and other forms of transportation be looked into. Such as car-pooling with sighted members, Lyft, and Uber.

A discussion was had to give a donation to Achilles International. Both Jim McCullum and Gary Allen run with their assistance. An amount of $500.00 was proposed. Nathanael Wales made a motion. Marchele Davis seconded, and it was passed that a donation of $500.00 would be made.

**Chapter News**-

Jim Cronin-At Large, Updated their constitution, they are taking the summer off but will start meeting again in September. They have three new members.

Deb Reed-Central Connecticut-They had a picnic in June. It was great to finally see each other in person. They also had an Outreach table at Walnut Creek Park for a celebration of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Next Meeting - 9:00am Business Meeting on October 31, 2021.

Respectfully submitted, Maryanne Melley

President, National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut