National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Saturday April 9, 2022, Milford CT, 11 AM

Meeting came to order at 11:11 AM.

Roll call: President Maryanne Melley, 1st Vice-President Beth Rival, 2nd Vice-President Mary Silverberg, Treasurer Nathanael Wales, Secretary Becky Ireland, Board Members Deb Reed, Jim McCollum, and Veronica Alston.

Absent: Board Member Brian Martin

We opened the meeting with the NFB pledge.

Treasurer’s Report:

Nathaniel gave the Treasurer’s report.

If you would like a copy of his report please contact Lucia and she will provide you with one.

Questions

A question was asked: which account are subsidies paid out from?

Nathaniel replied that all subsidies are paid with money in our checking account.

Pres. Melley asked if necessary can we transfer money from our Savings account to the checking account to help pay for subsidies?

Nathaniel replied absolutely that would not be a problem.

Beth Rival made a motion to accept the Treasurer’s report.

Seconded: Mary Silverberg

Vote: 8 to 0 motion passes.

Reports:

ABPVI (Advisory Board for People with Visual Impairments) – Beth Rival

Beth reported the following:

* The Board needed a ¾ vote to adopt new laws and bills. After a brief discussion, the Board voted to change this to a two-thirds vote. This new Bylaw is now in effect.
* They discussed the need for low vision doctors. They are struggling to fill these positions. A committee is currently working on the problem.
* There are several people retiring this year as well as many openings that still need to be filled. Beth mentioned to both Amy Porter and Mary Burkhardt that she would like to put the job openings on the NFB of CT listserv. We may have people who might be interested in applying for these positions however they are not complying yet. One of those retiring is the Interim Director in July.
* The Board discussed the bill concerning the LBPH library. After a brief discussion, the Board voted to vote down the bill should it come up again.

Mary Silverberg added that she had a Zoom meeting with Cheryl Cepelak. They discussed how BESB wants to find their focus areas, regroup, and set goals so they will have a starting point for the new Director. Cheryl also mentioned doing another satisfaction survey and this time include clients that did not have employment success. Mary suggested that she look into the programs that both New Jersey and the Louisiana Center for the Blind currently have.

Members discussed the large amount of retiring people at BESB and their lack of communication with us. We also discussed several options we could do to assist BESB including possibly adding money to the Technology Fund to aid in electronic training.

Jim McCollum made a motion to accept the ABPVI report.

Seconded: Mary Silverberg

Vote: 8 to 0 motion passes.

SRC (State Rehabilitative Council) – Deb Reed

Deb reported the following:

* The previous Chair Dawn Russell resigned her position. Gary Allen put in his name for Chair and Phillip Magalnick put his name in for Vice-Chair both were voted in unanimously.
* There are still four vacancies on the Council Recipient of Service, Workforce Investment Systems, Dept. of Labor, and the Client Assistance Program.
* The Treasurer Scott Becker reported that $25,416.58 was given to the NFB to support Newsline.
* Professor Diana Collins from CCSU addressed our concerns about the last Consumer Satisfaction Survey. She gave them some push back stating that the statistics, and the integrity of the surveys would be compromised, and they would be unable to make useful comparisons with future surveys. She mentioned that they are working on an all accessible electronic survey to replace the system they currently have. The Council is going to look into the Federal requirements for reporting and the collection of data.
* The success story this month for VOC Rehab is Victor Sambo. He graduated with a degree in Communications with a specialization in video productions. After his health declined he volunteered at his local high school helping students in the special education dept. He has now been hired as Paraprofessional and focuses on employment outcomes for high school students and secondary education students.

Comments:

Pres. Melley clarified that the SRC does not pay for Newsline, BESB does. The NFB of CT pays the rest at the end of the year with a very generous grant.

Becky Ireland made a motion to accept the SRC report.

Seconded: Beth Rival

Vote: 8 to 0 motion passes.

PAC Plan (Pre-Authorized Contribution) – Len Schlenk

Len reported the following:

* He stated that Connecticut currently ranks 45th out of all fifty-six affiliates participating in the plan and hopes we can do better.
* He encouraged everyone to contribute to the plan. If you would like to donate please contact Len and he will help you sign up for the program.

BCAC (Bureau of Consumer Advocacy Committee) – Korrine Herlth

Korrine was unable to attend the meeting however she sent her report to Maryanne. It follows:

* Matthew Geeza is the new Director of the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped as of November 1, 2021.
* Existing service: LBPH continues to provide free reading materials to any CT resident, adult, or child, who is unable to read regular print due to a visual, physical, or reading disability.  This service is offered via USPS or by digital download.  LBPH is a National Library Service (NLS) network library, so all books and equipment are made available through the NLS.  LBPH follows the NLS service model for all network libraries across the nation.
* Expanded Service
  + LBPH now offers patrons the option to drop off or pick up materials at the following locations
* CT State Library at 75 Van Block Ave, Hartford
* CT State Library at 231 Capitol Ave, Hartford
* CT State Library, Middletown Library Service Center, 786 South Main St. Middletown,
* Public Libraries across the state.

Patron’s work with their reader’s adviser at LBPH to coordinate location and date of drop off.  The reader’s adviser will make all arrangements with staff at the various locations to ensure delivery of items to a patron’s desired location.

* Additional areas of focus for LBPH.  These areas were developed in consultation with the Director, Division of Library Development from the CT State Library, and the CT State Librarian Communication and Engagement
* Relaunch LBPH newsletter.  Newsletter was suspended during Covid, last issue was Winter 2019.  New newsletter went out December 15, 2021.
* New Mobile Outreach Van – State library will acquire a van that has equipment to take events, programming, staff, and resources to locations across the state. It can also be used by LBPH for one-on-one training at veteran’s facilities, senior centers, and public libraries.
* Relaunch LBPH book club – to be determined in terms of in-person or virtual
* Summer Reading Program – LBPH will work with Division of Library Development colleagues to promote the CT State’s Libraries summer reading program.  LPBH will work with libraries to ensure that they are aware of LBPH resources so that librarians can share these resources with patrons
* Author Talks – LBPH would like to sponsor author talks virtually or in person.  Locations could be at CT State Library buildings or other locations across the state.
* Training for Librarians/Libraries across CT – provide information about LBPH and NLS, the application process, and resources available to eligible patrons
* Develop existing and potential partnerships with other state and community organizations.
* Work to create and establish regional LBPH hubs – the CT State Library will investigate establishing regional hub at approximately six public libraries across CT.  These hubs would have LBPH information kiosks, staff would receive additional training about LBPH services and resources, and LBPH staff can regularly visit to interact with patrons and support library staff.

: The Federationist – Brianna Rigsby

Brianna was not present at the meeting. Pres. Melley asked members to check the List Serve or with their Chapter Presidents to find out what topics Brianna is seeking for the next issue of the Federationist.

New Business

BELL Academy (Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning) – Beth Rival

Beth reported that the program will be a hybrid event from July 18th to Aug. 1st. You may send children to National for the 2 week virtual program. The Mentors for BELL this year are Deb Reed, Beth Rival, Maryanne Melley, and Kristen Dockendorff. They are planning to do an in person event scheduled for Aug. 8th thru Aug. 12th. Beth described how they plan to get the word out and some of the things they will be doing with the children. Beth asked for suggestions for a day trip the kids might enjoy.

Birdies for Charity – Mary Silverberg reported that last year’s goal was $2,000.00 and we raised $2,444.00. This includes both 15% from Travelers and members donations. This year the goal is set at $2,500.00. Mary and Joe are currently working with Lucia and Brian Mackey to put a link on our website so members can donate directly online. Mary mentioned that Travelers made one change this year. They will no longer accept checks under $200.00. If you prefer to donate by check, you can send them to Lucia. Make sure to put in the memo line Birdies for Charity. This year The Traveler’s Championship runs from June 23rd through June 26th. June 26th is the last day you can donate. Mary will be sending out “Chirps” on the list serve when you can start donating.

Pres. Melley announced that Dan Parker, Paul Duquette’s friend and who also spoke at our convention last year, broke the blind driver record going 211.043 miles an hour. He is the new Guinness champion.

Membership Dues:

Pres. Melley stated that currently members pay $3 dues to the affiliate. She proposed raising this to $5.

Nathaniel mentioned that if this passes we will have to bring it up again at our next board meeting and then vote to have the constitution amended at our next state convention.

Deb Reed made a motion to raise the dues from $3 to $5.

Seconded, Mary Silverberg

Vote: 8 to 0 motion passes.

BESB Survey:

Pres. Melley read to the members the survey info and questions created by BESB.

Members discussed their concerns about the survey. The major concerns mentioned were the reference in question 7 to “manager”, what they meant by threat, and the short amount of time given to complete the survey. It was suggested to answer question 7 saying that we want a director and that threat meant barriers.

LBPH CT Library:

Pres. Melley stated that the Bill we were against was voted down. However, it was kept alive by Senator Olsen using new language. Members discussed how unnecessary this bill is and the need to contact our Representatives and express our concerns.

Subsidies for the National Convention July 5th -July 10th in New Orleans:

Pres. Melley stated that we are able to provide subsidies for the National convention this year. She asked members to suggest an amount for the proposed subsidies.

Deb Reed suggested the amount of $750.

Charlie Rival gave the Board estimates for airfare to and from the convention. He gave an estimate from $754 to about $850 to $900 round trip.

After a brief discussion members agreed this is a good amount to offer as a subsidy. Subsidies will be given out to each person attending the convention.

Deb Reed made a motion that the subsidies be in the amount of $750.

Seconded: Mary Silverberg

Vote: 8 to 0 motion passes.

Fund Donations for Convention:

Pres. Melley mentioned that every year we make donations to four different funds. Last year we gave $300 to the SUN Fund, $600 to the White Cane Fund, $500 to the Jacobus tenBroek Fund and the Kenneth Jernigan Fund. She recommended reducing the Jacobus tenBroek Fund to $400 and raising the Kenneth Jernigan Fund to $600.

After a brief discussion members agreed that the Kenneth Jernigan Fund is an important fund and is more helpful than the tenBroek Fund.

Beth Rival made a motion to donate $300 to the SUN Fund, $600 to both the White Cane Fund and the Kenneth Jernigan Fund, and $400 to the Jacobus tenBroek Fund totaling in the amount of $2,000.

Seconded: Mary Silverberg

Vote: 8 to 0 motion passes.

Chapter and Division Donations:

Pres. Melley mentioned that the divisions usually donate gift cards for door prizes at the National Convention.

The Student Division and the Guide Dog Divisions will decide on the amount of their donations at their next meeting.

Each chapter will discuss their donations with their members at their next meetings. Everyone will let Maryanne know when the decisions are made.

Raise for Lucia:

Pres. Melley mentioned that it has been a long time since Lucia had a raise. She recommended a $6 raise for Lucia.

After a brief discussion members agreed to give Lucia the raise in this amount.

Mary Silverberg made a motion to give Lucia a raise in the amount of $6.

Seconded: Beth Rival

Vote: 8 to 0 Motion passes.

Donation to the Lions Visually Impaired Fishing:

Pres. Melley mentioned that each year the Berlin Lions Club put on this event. The Lions take blind individuals out on a fishing trip. Several of our members have gone on these trips. These trips are free to all blind individuals and the cost for paying for everything is expensive. Pres. Melley thought it would be nice to donate $1,000 towards the Lions Fishing Tournament for all they do for us and all blind individuals.

After a discussion members agreed that this would be a nice way to give back and say thank you.

Mary Silverberg: made a motion to donate $1,000 to Berlin Lions Club.

Seconded: Beth Rival

Vote: 8 to 0 motion passes.

Chapter News:

Southern Chapter- Len Schlenk

Len mentioned that they have two new members and will continue to build up the membership. They are currently planning to do an outreach at the Oyster Fest.

At Large Chapter- Jim Cronin

Jim mentioned they had several speakers at their last few meetings. They had a spoke person from IRS, who spoke about their services, Jonathan Gantry, who spoke about the use of Braille, and Beth Rival, who spoke about the pros, cons, and the commitment of having a guide dog.

Central CT Chapter- Deb Reed

Deb mentioned that Tom Barretta ran the meeting in March. They also had a spoke person from IRS who spoke about their services to the members. On May 14th they are going to do an outreach at Pet Smart in Plainville from 10 AM to 12AM and are also currently planning a picnic in June

Mary Silverberg mentioned that from April 1st to June 30th public transportation will be free of charge.

The next NFB Board meeting is scheduled for July 23, 2022, from 11 AM to 3 PM and will be hosted by the Central CT Chapter.

The meeting adjourned at 2:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Becky Ireland

Secretary