**National Federation of the Blind OF CT**

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**Saturday, July 20, 2024 , Via Zoom**

**11:00 AM**

**Call to order:**

**Pres. Melley called the meeting of the NFB of CT Board to order at 11:13 AM .**

**Roll Call:**

**Members Present: Maryanne Melley (President), Nathanael Wales (1st Vice-President), Mary Silverberg (2nd Vice-President), Cheri Duquette (Treasurer), Becky Ireland (Secretary), Deb Reed (Board Member), Allison Arbuckle (Board Member), Veronica Alston (Board Member), and Beth Rival (Board Member). Members Absent: None.**

**NFB Pledge:**

**Pres. Melley led the members in the NFB Pledge.**

**Minutes For April 20,2024:**

**No action was taken.**

**Reports**

**Treasurer's Report: Cheri Duquette**

**Tr. Duquette gave the Treasurers report. If you would like a copy, please contact Lucia at llee@nfbct.org and she will send you a copy.**

**Questions and Comments**

**• Pres. Melley asked Jim Cronin, according to the Treasurer's report his chapter has a balance of $ 90.19, whether or not he forwarded the chapter dues to the affiliate.**

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**Jim Cronin replied that he did and doesn't know why they were not included.**

**Also, there was a question about where the funds for the Woodward Scholarship came from. Tr. Duquette said she would look into both queries and let us know her findings at our next meeting.**

**SRC ( State Rehabilitation Council ): Deb Reed**

**BM. Reed reported the following:**

**The SRC has four new members they are Joe Carbone (CEO of The Workplace), Laura Knapp (Parent consultant for the CT Advocacy Center), Shelly Ann McDermott (part of the BEP program and the Business Enterprise Committee), and Melissa Thompson (representing the Independent Living Council). Director Jenkins is still waiting for a quote from CCSU to conduct the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. There was a question about using a different vendor; however, they must use this vendor because they are contracted by the state. Since the pricing is high for this survey Director Jenkins is trying to get a three-year memorandum that should give the bureau better pricing.**

**The SRC now has a budget of $ 10,000. A policy will be crafted on how it is to be used. Ideas discussed and voted on were reimbursing members for attending National Conferences or SRC meetings in person. A committee was formed to establish the details.**

**Jennifer Proto gave a legislative update. She reported that $1,000,000 was given to the Department of Aging and Disability Services. $ 200,000 was allocated to establish a new bureau for the Deaf, hearing impaired, and Blind-Deaf individuals. This will require the hiring of a new Director by October 1st who will report directly to Commissioner Porter.**

**ABPVI (Advisory Board Persons with Visual Impairments):**

**Mary Silverberg**

**2nd VP. Silverberg reported the following: Steven Thal spoke about BESB's active participation in a variety of conferences and training at state and national levels in preparation for Blind Americans Equality Day on Oct 15th.**

**Mary Burgard reported on the Business Enterprise program on behalf of Tyrell Samson. She outlined an extensive list of positive changes. Mary also reported on the upgrade of the Low Vision and Technology Room. It now includes four CC-TV's and other high and low tech items.**

**In the summary of the State Plan, completed by July 1 for the next four years, five goals were noted under VOC Rehab . They included: (A) Outreach for understanding populations in urban areas , especially in Spanish with bilingual populations; (B) Employment: to develop jobs in communities and assist clients in finding and qualifying for those jobs; (C) Do the same for Vets in Orange and in Newington; (D) Participate in National conferences to learn best practices in other states; (E) BESB to become an active partner in the American Job Center.**

**The Silver Summit was held at the Hartford Marriot. The goal was to provide resources, activities, and networking opportunities for seniors.**

**Jennifer Proto provided a legislative update. See the SRC report above. She reported that on May 16 she submitted the names and contact information of four NFB members interested in joining the Board to Carol Jenkins. They were Eileen Torow, Paul Duquette, Marilyn Wenzel, and Marchele Davis; however, due to work constraints Marchele is unable to serve at this time. 2nd VP Silverberg stated that she had a long conversation with Tom Scanlon regarding appointments and procedures. He was very informative and eager to help. Members who need assistance filling out the application can call him, and he will help you fill it out over the phone. He also mentioned that he is working with Carol Jenkins to fill these positions onto the Board. They also discussed establishing a transitional team to aid new members in their integration onto the Board.**

**Members had a brief discussion about appointments to the Board. Kristen Dockendorff expressed interest in applying. 2nd VP Silverberg will forward Members names and information to Tom Scanlon, in the Secretary of State office, and will inform him they may be calling him for assistance. She will also forward Tom Scanlon's information to interested members.**

**A motion was made to accept the ABPVI report by 1st VP Wales.**

**Seconded: BM Rival**

**Vote: 9 to 0, motion passes, report approved.**

**BCAC (Bureau Consumer Advocacy Committee): Melissa Thompson**

**Melissa Thompson was not present. No Report was given.**

**PAC Plan (Pre-Authorized Contribution) Maryanne Melley**

**Pres. Melley gave the following update:**

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**We had several members sign up to be donors to the PAC plan. She and 1st VP Wales discussed increasing the Affiliates donation from $ 25 to $ 100 a month. She stated that we are fortunate to have the funds to be able to do this and that these funds are used to help all of us.**

**New Business**

**Convention Committee Update: Jim Cronin**

**Jim reported the following:**

**They have six or seven vendors confirmed for the convention and two or three are still pending. The Vendor Fair will be on Friday night. They have twelve to fourteen speakers lined up and several that are not yet confirmed. If you have any ideas for speakers let Jim know. Jim went through the agenda for the convention. He described the different events, general sessions, fitness breaks and the banquet that will take place at the convention. Jim spoke about the possibility of having a live band playing after the banquet for fun and dancing. He also mentioned that members can donate individually to sponsor our convention. If interested contact Jim or Lucia for details.**

**Pres. Melley stated that we will be having stations for Friday's night dinner. She described what each station will have. One is a potato station and all the fixings; the other station will be Asian style food. Pres. Melley also spoke about doing "Mixing It Up". She would call on certain members to sit at a table with another chapter. Then members could talk about what they learned about the members they have met. She feels it is a good way for members to meet and get to know each other.**

**Berlin Fair : Gary Allen**

**Gary Allen reported the following:**

**The Berlin Fair will be from Thursday, September 12th to Sunday, September 15th. One change is instead of only vendor set up it will be a full day for the fair. So, vendors will have to arrive early Thursday morning to set up for the fair. They are seeking volunteers to assist at the table . If you are interested, please let him know.**

**Door Prizes are needed for our State Convention: Maryanne Melley**

**Pres. Melley requested that all Chapters and Divisions donate door prizes for our convention. Door prizes can be Visa, Amazon, or store gift cards, cash, or any items you wish to donate. All door prizes should be given to Lucia no later than October 15th.**

**National Convention 2025: Nathanael Wales**

**1st VP Wales reported the following:**

**The National Convention for 2025 will be in New Orleans. It will be held at the same two hotels as last time. They are located on Canal Street next to the French Quarter. The location is ideal. There are several great restaurants in the area and plenty of transportation options.**

**The dates for the convention are July 8, 2025 to July 13, 2025. He briefly described some of the events that will take place at the convention. More information will be coming soon.**

**Blind Americans Return to Work Act: Jim McCollum**

**Jim reported the following:**

**The Blind Americans Back to work Act has been introduced in Congress. It has been given the number HR 8878. Currently the law states that people on SSDI who earn a dollar more than $2590 a month will risk losing their benefits. This bill will prevent that. People on SSDI will lose one dollar for every two dollars over the $2590 limit each month. This will make it possible for Blind Americans to work full time and better positions without the fear of losing their benefits. To get this bill passed Jim is asking all members to call their Senators and Representatives and ask them to cosponsor and support this bill. You can call the Capitol switchboard and ask to speak with your Representatives. The number is 202-224-3121. For those who prefer to send emails Jim will forward a list of emails for all Representatives and Senators.**

**Memory of Life for Steve Famiglietti: Maryanne Melley and Mary Silverberg**

**Pres. Melley stated that she and several members of the NFB attended the event at the Oak Hill Neat Center. She mentioned that it was very nicely done. She also said that she gave a brief speech dedicating the bench and that several others stood up and shared their favorite memories of Steve. 2nd VP Silverberg mentioned that the bench we donated was inside. It will be placed in its final position when construction is finished. She also mentioned that Steve's family was there and that his mother was very pleased with our donation of the bench. Pictures taken at the event will be posted up at our state convention.**

**Chapter News**

**Central CT Chapter: Deb Reed**

**BM Reed reported that at their June meeting they enjoyed a nice lunch, and a fun game of Family Feud featuring the Blind vs sighted a fun time was had by all. They have two outreaches with the Bristol Disability Commission at the Farmers Market, and Family Day at Roswell Park. Also, Kara, from BESB, will be coming to their September meeting.**

**Southern Fairfield Chapter: Jim Cronin**

**Jim reported that they finished their training in the Pegasus program. They were invited to the group's headquarters in New York, where they had an outreach table. He praised his 1st VP Dolores for doing a great job running the June meeting in his absence. They plan to get together for a dinner at Chang's Chinese Restaurant and a day trip to Beach Island in Greenwich. He mentioned he gave some flyers to his eye doctor, who was happy to get them, and plans to do the same with his other doctor.**

**Southern Chapter: Marchele Davis**

**Marchele reported they successfully hosted the Board meeting in April. For their June meeting they went to the Boathouse Restaurant. At this meeting one member described her experience at the Carroll Center. At their September meeting they will decide who presents for each month.**

**At Large Chapter : Allison Arbuckle**

**BM Arbuckle reported that she has been presenting notes from the monthly Presidential Addresses. They also spoke about eye awareness and Global Disability Day. At their June meeting Pres. Melley attended and spoke to them about courtesy at chapter meetings.**

**Hartford Chapter: Melissa Thompson**

**Gary Allen gave the report for Melissa. He reported that they have decided to meet in August, the meeting is scheduled for the 17th. As mentioned above they are doing an outreach at the Berlin**

**Fair. If interested in helping contact Melissa or Gary.**

**Appreciation:**

**Marchele Davis wanted to express her appreciation to Deb Reed and Allison Arbuckle for their words of encouragement and all the help they have given her.**

**Both Pres. Melley and Jim Cronin both thanked and praised Mary Silverberg and Joe Kolczynski for all their hard work doing the Birdies for Charity event. 2nd VP Silverberg will give a report at our next Board Meeting.**

**The next scheduled meeting of the NFB of CT Board will be November 3, 2024 at our convention.**

**Adjournment:**

**The Meeting adjourned at 1:28 PM.**

**Respectfully Submitted by,**

**Becky Ireland**

**Secretary**