**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF CONNECTICUT**

**BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**

**Sat. April 13, 2024, Fowler Memorial Building, Milford, 11 AM**

**1st VP Wales called the meeting of the NFB of CT to order at 11:25 AM.**

**1st VP Wales led the members in the NFB pledge.**

**ROLL CALL:**

**Board Members Present: Nathanael Wales (1st Vice-President), Cheri Duquette (Treasurer), Becky Ireland (Secretary), Deb Reed (Board Member), and Veronica Alston (Board Member).**

**Board Members Absent: Maryanne Melley (President), Mary Silverberg (2nd Vice-President), Beth Rival (Board Member), and Allison Arbuckle (Board Member).**

**Note: President Melley is still on a medical leave of absence.**

**REPORTS:**

**New Chapter:**

**1st VP Wales stated that President Riccobono has approved the South Fairfield Chapter, formerly the Stamford or Southwest chapter, constitution. National still has to finalize a few things before they offer a charter to our newest chapter.**

**Minutes for the Jan. 6, 2024 Meeting:**

**1st VP Wales asked members if they received the minutes and read them.**

**Tr. Duquette made a motion to approve the January 6, 2024 minutes as written.**

**Seconded: BM Allston**

**Vote: 5 to 0, motion passes, minutes approved.**

**Treasurer’s Report-Cheri Duquette:**

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

**Comments and Questions:**

* **BM Reed suggested that the affiliate should add money to the NFB Technology Fund.**
* **1st VP Wales agreed and said that we can revisit this at our Summer or the November business meeting.**
* **Jim Cronin asked about the payments for the affiliate pledge to the blind museum.**
* **Tr. Duquette replied the pledge was for $25,000 and the affiliate sent the first installment in November of 2023 and that we will send the next one this November.**

**Sec. Ireland made a motion to accept the Treasurer’s report.**

**Seconded: BM Reed**

**Vote: 5 to 0, motion passes, report approved.**

**ABPVI (Advisory Board for Persons who are Visually Impaired) Mary Silverberg:**

**2nd VP Silverberg was not present. No report was given.**

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

**BM Reed reported the following:**

* **Carrie Fredette, Vice-President of the National Coalition of Rehabilitative Councils, was their special guest. She is the educational consultant for the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services.**
* **She hosts two national conferences annually. These conferences cover mandates, various challenges, solutions, and practices for rehabilitative councils.**
* **Conferences also helped to provide technical support for Consumer Satisfaction survey data and consumer needs assessment surveys.**
* **Chairman Magalnick is attending the conferences. He is intent on finding better ways to illicit responses from clients for these important surveys.**
* **Things he noted were highlighted in the data collected this cycle. The needs mentioned were assistive technology training and products.**
* **The Voc Rehab success story was facilitated by Counselor Eric Jones. He introduced PCA and Mother Maureen Stacy and her son Eugene Stacy, who has multiple disabilities. The state was helpful in assisting Eugene retain employment by providing help with his education and securing modified transportation for him. Eugene works in the Records Retention Dept. in a doctor’s office, has written several books, and hosts a podcast.**

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

**Melissa was not present.**

**Sec. Ireland stated that Melissa informed her that the BCAC has not met since our last meeting and that there was nothing to report at this time.**

**PAC Plan (Pre-Authorized Contribution) Len Schlenk:**

**Len reminded members how easy it is to donate. He said you can donate individually, as a chapter or small group. He encouraged members to ask family and friends to donate to the plan.**

 **If you are interested in donating, please contact Len at (203)294-1891.**

 **1st VP Wales gave a brief description on how The NFB uses the money donated by members to the PAC plan.**

 **So, please consider becoming a contributor or, if possible, increase your contribution to the plan.**

**The Federationists Brianna Rigsbee:**

**Brianna was not present. No report was given.**

**Washington Seminar 2024 Mary Silverberg:**

**Mary was not present. George read her report in her absence. He reported the following:**

* **Mary and Joe led the 11 member Connecticut delegation, during the week of January 29th, in Washington DC.**
* **The seminar was from January 29th to February 1st.**
* **They met with all 7 of Connecticut’s senators and representatives. They sought sponsorship or co-sponsorship for several bills.**
* **Bills discussed included the Medical Device Non-Visual Accessibility Act, the Website and Software Applications and Accessibility Act, and the Blind Americans Return to Work Act.**
* **Mary stated that they are optimistic about legislative progress during the coming year which will benefit all in the Blind community.**

**Accessible Absentee Voting Ballot Nathanael Wales:**

**1st VP Wales gave a quick update. He reported the following:**

* **In the last week of January Pres. Melley coordinated with Jeff Kellog, from our national office, who ensures voting at polling places and absentee voting is accessible, independent, and private.**
* **Jeff, for the last few months, has been coordinating with 1st VP Wales and Disability Rights Connecticut. He is putting together a coalition to make the legislative changes needed to bring electronic voting to Connecticut.**
* **1st VP Wales plans to follow up with Jeff about making the delivery of an absentee ballot, that we fill out, accessible.**

**Questions and Comments:**

* **Jim Cronin asked what are the systems that are used for electronic voting.**
* **1st VP Wales replied at there are a couple of vendors. There is one through Microsoft and another by Democracy Live as well as other reputable companies.**
* **BM Allston asked if you have to ask for an absentee ballot?**
* **1st VP Wales replied yes, you do. You can get an application for one at your local town hall or you can fill it out online. He requested that anyone who has trouble filling out an application for an absentee ballot online, let him know the forms should be accessible.**
* **BM Reed noted that the cost for the system or software would cost the State $25,000 and is very affordable.**

**Lions Club Donation:**

**1st VP Wales stated that every year the Lions Club holds a Fishing Tournament for adults and children who are blind. We donated last year, and he would like to do so again. Making this donation shows how much we appreciate all they do for the blind. After a brief discussion members agreed on a $2500 donation to the Lions Club.**

**BM Reed made a motion to donate $2500 to the Lions Club fishing tournament.**

**Seconded: Sec. Ireland**

**Vote: 5 to 0, motion passes, donation approved.**

**Birdies For Charity 2024 Mary Silverberg:**

**2nd VP Silverberg was not present. George Reed read her report. He reported the following:**

* **2nd VP Silverberg and Joe Kolczynski will be leading the NFBCT’s fundraising efforts again this year.**
* **The tournament will take place at the TPC Highlands in Cromwell from June 17th to June 23rd.**
* **On April 17th they will be attending a Birdies kickoff event in Cromwell.**
* **Stay tuned for their first chirp later this month.**
* **George stated that for every $100 the NFBCT raises Travelers adds $15.**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**National Convention 2024:**

**1st VP Wales stated that the National Convention will be in Orlando, Florida from July 3rd to July 8th. You can go to nfb.org, click convention and there you will find information on how to register and reserve your room. He also reminded members the affiliate is offering a $850 grant for active members to help them attend the convention. All those who receive a grant are required to attend the general sessions, the state caucus, attend a special interest group meeting, and assist at the NFB Independence Market table. You can find the application for the grant on our website nfbct.org.**

**National Funds Donations:**

**1st VP Wales and Pres. Melley proposed we donate the following amounts to the funds listed below:**

* **The White Cane fund: $2,000**
* **Kenneth Jernigan fund: $2000**
* **Jacobus TenBroek fund: $1,000**
* **SUN Fund: $1,000.**

**1st VP Wales briefly described that for which each of these funds are used.**

**After a brief discussion, members agreed, due to the fact we have a large group going to the convention, to adjust the amounts of the donations.**

**TR. Duquette made a motion to donate $1,500 to the White Cane and Kenneth Jernigan funds, and $800 to the Jacobus TenBroek and SUN funds, if fewer members than expected attend, then we can revisit this.**

**Seconded: Sec. Ireland**

**Vote: 5 to0, motion passes, donations approved.**

**Door Prizes for National Convention:**

**1st VP Wales asked all Chapters and Divisions to donate door prizes for the convention. All door prizes should be general like a prepaid Visa gift card, not all states have the same businesses. All gift cards should be delivered to Lucia.**

**Members also had a brief discussion about the possibility of bringing a national convention to the Northeast. 1st VP Wales encouraged members to submit their suggestions and ideas.**

**State Convention 2024:**

**1st VP Wales stated that the state convention, this year, will be November 1st to November3rd. He then presented two proposals from two hotels. One is from the Courtyard Marriot in Waterbury and the Courtyard Marriot in Shelton. Most costs are comparable, however, in Shelton the rooms and banquet meal will be more expensive, they will not charge any fees for use of their ballroom whereas the location in Waterbury will charge these fees.**

**Members discussed both locations and agreed to check out the Shelton location. Suggestions were made to help members to offset the higher cost. Suggestions included a grant or a discount, provided by the affiliate, if proven you preregistered for the convention.**

**BM Reed made a motion to choose and further investigate the Courtyard Marriot in Shelton.**

**Seconded: Tr. Duquette**

**Vote: 5 to 0, motion passes, convention location approved.**

**State Convention Scholarships:**

**1st VP Wales named the scholarships we award at the convention this included our new one, the Steve Famiglietti Scholarship fund. He also stated that each year, out of the general fund, we award the Bruce and Betty Woodward scholarship. Currently there are no funds in place for this fund. He asked if we would like to do it again this year.**

**After a brief discussion, the Board decided to move funds into the Woodward Scholarship Fund.**

**Tr. Duquette made a motion to put $3,000 in the Bruce and Betty Woodward Scholarship fund.**

**Seconded: Sec. Ireland**

**Vote: 5 to 0, motion passes, fund approved.**

 **CHAPTER NEWS**

**Central CT Chapter Deb Reed:**

**BM Reed reported at their March meeting they watched a podcast about personal safety, after which members discussed a variety of strategies, they use to keep safe. They gathered information for the Bristo; Medical Commission to help them understand problems the blind have in receiving medical care. She spoke about guest speakers they will have at their future meetings.**

**South Fairfield Chapter Jim Cronin:**

**Jim reported on the two outreaches they had in January, stating that they went very well. He mentioned they had a guest speaker from CTLABS from whom they learned a lot. He also spoke about an outing the chapter took to a comedy club. He stated that in April they will be starting a spring session called Pegasus, where you learn to take care of horses and get to know them.**

**Southern CT Chapter Marchele Davis:**

**Marchele reported that they had several guest speakers including Shaun Halloway from Washington DC in January, he spoke about his life story and the National convention. In February they had Melissa Thompson, from the Hartford chapter, and Brandon Marshall, from Wichita, KS, they spoke about their experiences as African Americans with a visual impairment.**

**NFB Technology Fund Paul Duquette:**

**Paul reported that they have selected the grant winner for this period. The name of the winner will be announced soon.**

**Summer Board Meeting:**

**The next scheduled NFB of CT Board meeting is August 3, 2024. This meeting will be held virtually, details to follow.**

**Adjournment:**

**BM Reed made a motion to adjourn.**

**Seconded: Sec. Ireland**

**Vote: 5 to 0, meeting adjourned at 2:44 PM.**

**Respectfully submitted by,**

**Becky Ireland**

**Secretary**