NFB OF CT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Saturday, August 9,2025, Via Zoom, 10 AM.

Call to Order:

Pres. Melley called the meeting of the NFB of CT Board to order at 10:09 AM.

Roll Call:

Members Present: Maryanne Melley (President), Mary Silverberg (2nd Vice-President), Becky Ireland (Secretary), Deb Reed (Board Member), Allison Arbuckle (Board Member), Veronica Alston (Board Member), Melissa Thompson (Board Member).

Note: Treasurer Cheri Duquette had a prior obligation and left the meeting after giving her Treasurer’s report.

NFB Pledge:

Pres. Melley led the members in the NFB Pledge.

Reports:

Minutes for April 2025 Board Meeting:

Pres. Melley asked if the Board read the minutes and if there were any corrections.

A motion to accept the April 5,2025 meeting minutes as written was made by 2nd VP Silverberg.

Second: BM. Arbuckle

Vote: 7 to 0, motion passes, minutes approved.

Treasurers Report: Cheri Duquette

Tr. Duquette gave a Treasurers report. If you would like a copy, please contact Pres. Melley, Tr. Duquette, or Sec. Ireland and they will send you a copy.

Comments and Questions:

* BM. Arbuckle asked what the balance is for the At-Large Chapter?
* Tr. Duquette replied that the chapter has a balance of $170.38.
* BM. Alston asked why there was no mention of account holdings for the Southern Chapter. She was asking because she knows the Chapter currently has funds.

Pres. Melley and Tr. Duquette both replied the Affiliate closed this fund because we were under the impression the Chapter had established its own account. If this is not the case, then they should get together and discuss the option of reopening a fund for the Chapter.

* BM Alston said that she will check with Marchele, current President of the chapter, for details and will let Tr. Duquette know.

A motion to accept the Treasurers report was made by BM. Reed.

Second: 2nd VP Silverberg

Vote: 7 to 0, motion passes, report approved.

ABPVI (Advisory Board for Persons with Visual Impairments):

No Report was given.

SRC (State Rehabilitation Council): Deb Reed

BM. Reed reported the following:

* The SRC meeting originally scheduled for June was rescheduled until July 16th due to technical difficulties.
* Director Jenkins has been working with SRC to update the policy manuals and training materials for SRC members.
* They have also rehabilitated the Consumer Satisfaction Survey questions to address the priorities of information needed. The new survey will be distributed in September.
* BESB collaborated in a presentation, with the Department of Aging, Senior Centers, and Social Security, regarding a grant to find employment for those 55 and older. VR Services can assist those who are visually impaired.
* The Department of Mental Health and Addictions Services sponsored a Diverse, Equity, and Inclusion training and a VR Counselor received certification.
* Supervisor Mary Burgard stated that all staff vacancies have been filled. She mentioned that this is the first time she has seen it happen.
* Summer activities included two in-person training sessions, by both the Transition and the VR Counselor Coordinators, with transitioning students and their parents. These students also attended financial literacy and self-advocacy training provided by Sky’s the Limit who specializes in working with the blind. These events took place at CCSU and Norwalk Community College.
* At the end, the June students attended a week-long cyber security training program at CCSU. Students stayed at the dorms and participated in other activities in the evenings. This event was hosted by Sky’s the Limit.

A motion to accept the SRC report was made by Sec. Ireland.

Second: BM. Thompson

Vote: 7 to 0, motion passes, report approved.

BCAC (Bureau Consumer Advocacy Committee): Melissa Thompson

BM. Thompson stated that due to technical difficulties the meeting had to be rescheduled, and no report was given.

New Business:

Birdies for Charity: Merly Ballesteros

Merly reported the following:

* She stated that she was nervous hosting this event for the first time. However, everyone was extremely helpful, and she felt that everything went very well.
* We raised $2018 from donors and with Webster Bank’s 15% donation of $372 we have a total of $2390.
* She said that next year she believes we shall surpass our goal.
* She did an interview with Rene Danino on I Heart Radio about the NFB of CT and how people can donate.
* She stated that Rene was friendly and extremely helpful and would like to get more involved. She has Rene’s contact information and will speak to her about her speaking at the convention.

Achilles Connecticut Sponsorship:

Pres. Melley stated that Achilles has asked if we would like to be a sponsor this year. We have been sponsors in the past and that we have three members in the program. She said there are several levels that we can sponsor them at and that we can choose the amount we prefer.

Members had a brief discussion about the amount for the sponsorship. Members agreed that this is an important program and would like to donate $1000.

Amotion to sponsor Achilles CT. in the amount of $1000 was made by BM Arbuckle.

Second: 2nd VP Silverberg

Vote: 7 to 0, motion passes, sponsorship approved.

Microsoft Suite:

Pres. Melley told members Christina Thompson, our Outreach Director, has suggested that the Affiliate use Microsoft Suite. Christina explained in detail how this program will make things easier for the affiliate. For example: Tr. Duquette will see bills as they come in enabling her to pay them quickly.

Members discussed changing over to this program. Questions about security concerns and the cost were addressed. Another option, Microsoft 365 Suite, was suggested. Pres. Melley will reach out to the National Office to see if we need approval to do this.

This discussion was tabled until our next meeting.

Courtesy Rules of Blindness:

Pres. Melley, while in Arkansas assisting at their convention, saw cardboard signs explaining the Courtesy Rules of Blindness. She gave a detailed description of the signs. Pres. Melley would like to purchase several signs for use at our conventions and outreach tables.

Members had a brief discussion and really liked the idea of these signs. Everyone feels they will be extremely helpful.

A motion to purchase Courtesy Rules of Blindness signs for use at state conventions and outreach tables was made by BM Reed.

Second: Sec. Ireland

Vote: 7 to 0, Motion passes, purchase approved.

CT List Serve:

BM. Thompson spoke about problems she is having posting items to the list serve. Several other members mentioned that they are also having problems. Problems not only include trouble posting messages but not receiving any postings from the list serve at all.

Pres. Melley said there have been several problems with the List Serve. She said that Christina has emailed the independent contractor several times about the problems and he still has not got back to her. Pres. Melley said she is going to contact the National Office about this and will keep everyone updated.

New Information for State Scholarship Form:

Pres. Melley thought the following information should be added to the state scholarship form: Finalists will be our guest at the state convention. Hotel and reasonable transportation costs will be covered.

Everyone agreed this is a good idea and the information will be added to the form.

1st VP Wales will add the information when he sends out a reminder about the scholarships application deadline on the List serve and to the Chapter presidents.

State Convention Update:

Pres. Melley reported the following:

* She will be meeting her contact at the Sheraton in Rocky Hill to finalize some details such as choosing meals and setting the code for members to use when registering for the convention.
* The rates are $119 per night plus tax. Any member who may need help with costs should let a member of the Affiliate board know.
* She reviewed the list of speakers for the convention. The speakers include the Southeast Community Center, Oak Hill technologist Gavin Olson, and Isabel Rosario for the Carroll Center.
* She also reviewed the vendors and sponsors for the convention. She thanked Jim McCullom and his family for being a sponsor this year.
* She told members, anyone who wants to attend the banquet must pay in order to be admitted. This is what National does at their conventions and that we will follow suit.
* All members attending must be registered at the hotel two weeks prior to the convention.
* The next Convention Committee meeting will be Monday August 11th.

Meta Glasses:

Kristen Dockendorff spoke a little about Meta Glasses. She stated that there are three styles they are all black, all clear, and transition. They come in several colors and with or without high ridge frames. Meta Glasses are available at Lens Crafters and at Amazon, prices may vary so you will need to check them out.

Chapter News:

Central CT Central Chapter: Deb Reed

BM Reed reported that in June they had their Chapter picnic, there was tasty food, fun, and lots of socializing and fun was had by all. She mentioned that she and George were busy with several outreaches for NFB Newsline, receiving several new subscribers and making several good contacts. Also, they will have a guest speaker, Robin Small, at their November meeting.

Greater Hartford Chapter: Melissa Thompson

BM Thompson reported they will be meeting on August 16th for final preparations for their outreach at the Berlin Fair. They are excited about this event and are making sure they have full coverage. Also, they welcomed four new members to their Chapter, and she is looking forward to collaborating with them.

Southern CT Chapter: Marchele Davis

Marchele reported they went on a bowling outing and had a wonderful time and in May they did a fundraiser at Stop & Shop. Their June elections had to be postponed due to lack of quorum. They have also welcomed two new members to their chapter.

At-Large Chapter: Allison Arbuckle

BM Arbuckle reported that they moved their meetings from conference calls to Zoom and there has been a major improvement. She mentioned they are on a break for the summer and that she has lined up a guest speaker for the September meeting. Their speaker is Michele Puzo for UR Community Cares.

Parents of Blind Children Division: Allison Arbuckle

BM Buckle reported that they are still trying to build this new division. Currently they have a handful of committed members. Right now, they meet on a Chat forum. Members made several suggestions to help recruit new members. One suggestion was to use the BELL contact list. Kristen volunteered to reach out the parents on the contact list.

The next scheduled meeting of the NFB of CT affiliate Board will be at the convention on Sunday November 9th.

The meeting adjourned at 11:59 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Becky Ireland

Secretary