National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut

September 2019 Board Meeting Minutes(Amended January 30, 2020 by Mary Silverberg)

Called to Order: 11:00 AM

NFB Pledge

Roll call: Rene, Joe, Marchele, Charlie, Gary, Honorata, Marilyn, Esther, Rob, Phil, Beth, Josefina, Nathanael, Maryanne, Mary, Jim

Secretary’s Report amendment (accepted): regarding insufficient amount of BESB eye doctors and subsequent vision evaluations

Treasurer’s Report:

Checking Account Balance: $17823.20

Savings Account Balance: $52534.27

General Funds (Liquid Assets): $34934.05

Restricted Funds: $35423.42

Blackford Fund (Newsline partnership with BESB and outreach (: $1506

Cummins Scholarship Fund (for TVI): $12053.93, will be able to award $2500 to scholarship recipient

Rodney Demarest Scholarship Fund: $7874.05, fund should cover this year and next even without further donations

Higley Fund: $269.95 contribution to fund scholarship again

Bruce Woodward Scholarship Fund: $1200, donations mostly come from outreach to previous scholarship winners

Leftover funds from 2016 BELL Program: $3853.02, saving for future Bell Program

Paul Duquette Technology Fund: $2998.94

At Large Chapter: $159.50

Waterbury Chapter: $218.05

Connecticut Association of Blind Students: $398.92

Connecticut Association of Guide Dog Users: $685.04

Connecticut Association of Blind Merchants: $20, not too active, could take money back into the affiliate funds

Southwest Chapter: $128.19

Shoreline Chapter: $421.97

Hartford Chapter: $226.05

State Convention Sponsorships: $2350

Holding assets of East of the River Chapter: $1084.83

* General funds over the past 5 months have increased from $20000
* Fundraising has not tapered off
* Solicitation letters by local chapters have been very successful
* Income is currently stable
* Income from fundraising has been $30000 since April, $50000 since January
* Subsidies for Washington Seminar and National Convention ranged from about $15000 to $20000 in the past
* Due to limited subsidies and smaller amounts for National Convention specifically, this year’s subsidies only accounted for $10000
* The cost associated with an Outreach director was approximately $50000 to $60000
* Lucia working from home instead of an office space has cut the cost to about $25000 a year, including salary, internet and telephone
* State convention expenses should be about what they were in past years
* Recommendation to increase investment in seminar and national convention subsidies or financial support at state convention
* Recommendation to use general funds to top off Bruce Woodward scholarship
* Note in the Constitution about how if a chapter is closed for 2 or more years, the funds of the chapter are then subject to the general fund
* Motion accepted to use general funds to top off Bruce Woodward Fund in order to award a $2500 scholarship and cover the recipient’s convention expenses
* Concern raised about NFB membership status of scholarship recipients
* Scholarships are party designed specifically to bring new young members into the organization, as demonstrated by National
* Description of scholarship recommendation process at both state and national level

Reports:

DOORS-BESB Report: Beth and Mary

* Budget appears to be stable until 2022
* Job opening for mobility instructor
* Name change to Department of Aging and Disabilities
* Openings on SRC (policy planning with Brian Sigman) and Advisory Commission (policy adjustments and revisions)
* Even though you are appointed by a government body, your interests can still reflect the views of the NFB
* Deb Reed is actively being appointed to the SRC
* Brian Sigman will be funding Newsline through next year

PAC Plan and Dream Maker Circle: Honorata

PAC Plan

* \* Monthly donations that benefit the national NFB office
* Connecticut is 45th place in the list of overall state by state contribution amounts
* Encourage individual and chapter donations of a minimum of $5 a month
* Three individuals have signed on
* Hartford signed on for $15 a month
* Southwest Chapter signed on for $10 a month
* Connecticut Affiliate joined PAC Plan at $25 a month
* Please notify Honorata if you are an individual who signed on so that she can keep track of numbers

Dream Maker Circle:

* Designate a portion of what you would like to leave behind upon your passing to the NFB
* Adding NFB to your insurance policy
* Creating a special bank account

Newsline: Gary

* Capability to download content of Newsline onto Voice Dream in order to listen to audio input other than voiceover on the iPhone
* Newsline can be enabled on Alexa as well
* Could be helpful to use the money not spent on Newsline to provide training for NFB members to use the app itself
* Possibly provide training at state convention
* Interest in putting a copy of the Federationist on Newsline
* Suggestion of emailing Scott White and ask if he can post important announcements to our Connecticut Newsline channel
* If chapter members do not have the technology to access Newsline or the Connecticut list serve, it is advisable for the chapter president to update his or her members directly
* For members who require hard copies of the material, Lucia sends out those packets
* Suggestion for Jim to contact chapter presidents when he receives national legislative alerts to relay the information
* Suggestion to create a legislative committee
* Suggestion to plan monthly chapter president calls starting in October
* Can register for state convention using regular word document, paper mail, or Google Form

Report from First-Time National Convention Attendee: Marilyn

* Message from fellow visually impaired members that “I am not alone.”
* Great sense of community
* Explored the Independence Market
* Enjoyed general session
* Wished she had more mentorship and was better informed
* Hoped that alternates could be chosen if first-time scholarship awardees could not attend national convention
* Note to stay in contact with board members for support and guidance
* National convention was unusually expensive
* Suggestion to hold a conference call with all Connecticut national convention attendees a month before national convention

Outreach: Phil

* “If Honorata and I can do this, so can you.”
* Attended a series of about 10 different meetings over 3 weeks, not all disability-related, to network and talk about the NFB
* Talked to various supermarkets about disability rights and better serving blind customers, helped develop policy and accessible systems
* Met with mayor or first selectman to become involved with their ADA or accessibility committee
* Let your voice be heard
* Educated emergency response teams
* Provided resources to the local Board of Education
* Golf Clinic to raise awareness
* Get involved by joining advisory boards and non-profits
* Extend your reach through creative means
* Explore your network and foster relationships
* Show interest in other causes so that others may help you in turn
* Place value on money so that others may be more willing to give it
* Contact Phil or Honorata for ideas
* Social media outreach
* Bring image descriptions to the table
* If you notice an access barrier, speak up, stand for fellow blind individuals

State Convention Updates:

* Aira will be free and available all weekend at the hotel
* Marchelle identified someone to speak the invocation on Saturday morning
* Shonda identified someone to speak the invocation before Saturday night’s banquet
* Expanded breakfast on Sunday morning starting at 8:00 AM
* Silver City serves breakfast starting at 7:00 AM
* Board meeting from 9:00 AM to noon
* Maryanne to run board elections
* Maryanne will be asking for changes to our Constitution
* The Constitution must be read first the day before, and then voted upon
* Amendment to update receiving date for affiliate dues to January 31st
* Amendment for removing age limit for NFB membership (age limit was previously 16 and older)

Miscellaneous:

* Volunteer for vehicle donation: Marilyn
* Volunteer for At Large Chapter: suggestion to rotate the responsibility between leaders for the next year until a president can be established, will bring to attention at state convention
* Esther volunteered to lead October’s At Large chapter meeting
* October is Meet the Blind Month
* Will hold chapter presidents call early in October to discuss strategies for greater outreach
* Continue to look for sponsors for upcoming state convention

Meeting Adjourned: 1:45 PM

Amendment from Mary Silverberg:

From: Mary Silverberg   
Sent: Thursday, January 30, 2020 11:04 AM  
Subject: Amendment to September, 2019 State Board Meeting Minutes

Maryanne and fellow board members,

During the month of January, I received an email containing the minutes of the September  state board meeting.  Under  the Outreach report on the agenda , Phil and I each  described our  outreach activities.  However, only Phil's report was reflected in the minutes.  Mine was omitted.

Below is a list of the activities which I reported.

Achillies Marathon Kickoff Dinner with Jason Romero, keynote  speaker.

Jim, Gary, Joe and I attended.  Since NFB was a sponsor for this event,  we were included in the photo shoot  and now our picture and efforts are on the Achillies website.

Joe and  I co-chair the  West Hartford Advisory Commission for People with Disabilities. We have in the past and continue to collaborate with  both the Police  and Fire Departments  on  development of a training segment when working with the blind/visually impaired community  and also updating emergency preparedness policies and procedures.

We have been invited by the Town of West Hartford to participate in the 10 year planning and development where  the issues of the blind  and visually impaired have been addressed.

We have worked directly with the Town Engineer on  crosswalks and audible signals.

Since I  arrange  and book the guest speakers for West Hartford Rotary Club, I have brought in  people to speak on many disabilities, including blindness.

As a member of the Governor's Committee  on Employment for People with Disabilities,  I have advocated for the needs of the blind community.

As a board member and consumer of service with ITNCentralCT,   (Independent Transportation Network)   I advocate for the needs of the blind and visually impaired.  Joe is also a board member and volunteer driver. We provide rides for a fee to people 60 years and older, also to  blind and visually impaired adults.

The minutes  of this meeting need to be amended to reflect this report.

Respectfully submitted,