National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut

Annual Business Meeting Minutes

November 1, 2020

Called to order: 9:07 AM

Recite of NFB Pledge:

Opening Remarks: Expression of thanks to NFB of CT Convention Committee - President Maryanne Melley

President Melley had extended her gratitude to the committee for all their dedication and hard work. She further went on to say, that she was grateful for all the speakers who had rendered presentations the day prior.

Roll Call: (NOTE: conducted By Last Name At time of board meeting.)

President: Maryanne Melley

1st Vice-President: Philip Magalnick

2nd Vice-President: Beth Rival

Acting Secretary: Marchele Davis

Treasurer: Nathanael T. Wales

Board Members:

Shonda R. Rosetta

Cheri Duquette

Mary Silverberg

Jim McCollum

Reading of convention 2019 Board Meeting Minutes - Dated November 3, 2019: George Reed

Correction(s) & Discussion:

Philip made corrections to the report: He stated that Nathanael Wales was not present at last year’s convention board meeting. In addition, Philip stated that Garry Allan and Alan Gunzberg were both NFB Affiliate members and on the SRC board. Also, he stated that the $400.00 subsidy was for the Washington Seminar, not for the convention. Maryanne had asked Philip if Alan Gunzberg was representing the NFB. It was stated that Allan was a recipient of service. Philip went on to say that the minutes did not indicate that they were members representing the NFB, but that they were members on the (SRC.)

Philip made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected. Mary seconded, and the minutes with corrections had been unanimously accepted.

Treasurer’s Report: Nathanael T. Wales

Treasurer’s Report was read, no discussion.

Philip made a motion on Treasurer’s Report. Mary seconded and motion passed.

Advisory Board Report: Mary Silverberg

Mary reported that the Board of Education for the Blind (BESB) have mailed 1000 calendars to all whom requested them. In addition, as of September, everyone mostly continues to work remotely. Furthermore, the services continue to be delivered virtually. However, some in-person services are required for the deaf blind clients. Also, in September, workers could make some home visits The Personal Adjustment Period proposal has changed to eliminate the 12-week limit in training. Furthermore, to fund the training program based on progress in the curriculum. With progress reports in 2 months intervals based on development of attitudes, habits, and skills.

The Advisory Board reviewed and unanimously approved the proposals. There will be a 30-day public hearing period. All persons are welcome to make any additional comments via email, mail, or call Brian Sigman. The SRC and the Advisory Board will meet in December to review the policy, comments, and to vote. The Children Services met in person by following protocol in their school districts. Additionally, it was reported that there were 4 visually Impaired teachers who had retired; three positions had been replaced. One position has been left open due to a hiring freeze.

The Business Enterprise Program in CT in addition to other states, have suffered immensely. Two social worker trainees started at (BESB). One fluent in American Sign Language covering the Northwest portion of CT. The other, confident in Spanish, servicing the Hartford area. Two Orientation & Mobility Specialists (O+M) continue to be vacant.

Lastly, it was reported that Lauri St. Amand mentioned volunteer activity. They assisted with 289 activities for 48 clients, supporting them with food, shopping, and medical appointments. (Report completed no discussion)

Beth made a motion to accept the Advisory Board Report. Jim seconded, and the Advisory Board Report was unanimously accepted.

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Deb Reed:

The draft of the Personal Adjustment Training Policy, as amended by the Advisory Board was voted on and passed by the SRC unanimously. A public comment period is now underway.
Dr. Diana Cohen from CCSU reported on the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. During COVID-19, the new format for quarterly contact with BESB clients is by phone, making up to eight or nine calls and showing State of Connecticut as the caller ID. 20% of BESB clients were unreachable. 96% would recommend BESB to someone.  This was up 3% from last fiscal year. 86% were satisfied with both their counselors and their services. 77 clients had an employment outcome. Dr. Cohen wants to start a focus group with some SRC members to get their perspective on the needs within the BESB VR program. I volunteered for the group, but I’ve heard nothing further. The Vocational Rehab program received $1.2 million in re-allotment funds. Projections indicate the Bureau will be able to serve all eligible VR clients into 2023. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the options for expending VR funds due to the high volume of providers that were not offering services. BESB had to Return to the federal government $45,000 in supported employment funds due to the lack of employment opportunities.

Next meeting December 16.

Mary made a motion to accept the (SRC) Report. Philip seconded, and the SRC Report was approval.

BESB Consumer Advisory Committee Report: (BCAC) Barbara Blejewski

Barbara reported that a school in New London, the South East Community Center of the Blind has a new director: Wendy Lusk. There’s a support group for guide dogs, that meet by Zoom on the 1st Saturday of the month., unless there’s a holiday, then they meet on the 2nd Saturday. Barbara stated that she would rather report on new organizations or those organizations that haven’t done much promoting awareness. Barbara stated that she has a report from Chris but is unable to read it due to having a cast on her arm and hand. She stated that she will email a copy of her report.

(Report completed with discussion)

Question from Deb: Would it be possible to have a list of emails to access the list of organizations from BCAC? Response from Barbara: Yes, also Maryanne has a copy of the report. Furthermore, The Library for the Blind, continues to mail books to patrons. Al Daniels requested that full names would be announced in addition to acronyms of committees.

(End of discussion)

Shonda made a motion to accept the BCAC Report. Beth seconded, and it was unanimously approved.

Vehicle Donation Report-Marilyn Wenzel:

Marilyn reported that there has not been any Vehicle Donations at that time. (Report complete with no discussion) Nathanael made a motion to accept the Vehicle Donation Report. Mary seconded, and it was unanimously approved.

Birdies for Charity Report: Mary Silverberg

Mary started out by expressing how George and Deb had done a fantastic job the last two years! Also, Mary stated that her and Joe are happy to facilitate this initiative.

$945 from 20 donors with 15%= $141.75. With all the total funds raised, $1086.75. Mary stated that she is pleased! Gratitude was extended to Marchele for assisting with the Facebook promotions. Furthermore, appreciations to Carolyn Dodd for making phone calls and keeping in touch with our donors. Twitter platform is up for consideration. Should this be in additional platform, the Birdies for Charity will be called “Tweets.” The goal for next year, is to reach more people.They plan on starting earlier next year! (Report complete with no discussion) Beth made a motion to accept the Birdies for Charity Report. Marchele seconded, and it was unanimously approved.

Pre-Authorized Contribution (PAC Plan): Anne West

Unfortunately, Anne was not present at the November Board Meeting. However, a prerecorded presentation was prepared. Anne stated that PAC is an easy and safe method to the National Federation. She went on to say that there are many ways to sign up. There is an accessible form on NFB.org/pac. Also, you can email PAC at: NFB.org with questions or to donate. Furthermore, you may call (877)632-2722. Ann stated that if you don’t have a computer, or are uncomfortable with forms, she will gladly fill the form for you and answer any questions. Anne’s phone number is: (860)628-6454. (Final comments) Thanks in advance for your generosity and support to our organization. Enjoy the convention! Maryanne stated that unfortunately, Anne has fallen ill. Therefore, she is no longer able to facilitate this initiative. Leonard Schlenk, from the Southern CT Chapter, has decided to assume this position. Leonard stated that he is hoping to do as good of a job. In addition, he encouraged us, the affiliate to promote the PAC plan, and to tell others to join and contribute. Leonard’s email is: lfs40@optonline.net. Phone: (203)394-1891

(Report completed with discussion) Philip made a motion to accept the PAC Report. Mary seconded and it was unanimously approved.

BELL Academy Report: Honorata Kazmierczak

Honorata reported on the challenges and successes of the BELL Program. From CT, 13 volunteers came forward to help with the program this summer along with, a volunteer TVI (Teacher of the Visually Impaired). Honorata stated that she worked closely with Karen Anderson who was the director of the BELL Academy. unfortunately, the pandemic had an impact, therefore, the program was converted into a virtual learning experience. This was called: “NFB BELL In Home Edition.” Several volunteer TVI’s throughout the country contributed their time and support. The students had received boxes of items to participate in the program. Honorata expressed her gratitude for the experience. Honorata stated that she is looking forward to supporting the program and to do all she can next year.

(Report completed with discussion)

Federationist Report: Briana Rigsbee:

Briana stated that she is coming up with ideas. Furthermore, she has a plan to have an upcoming issue with regards to diversity, ethnicity, and other social constructs and how that impacts blindness and other disabilities. If anyone desires to place issues or articles, feel free to contact Briana at:

editor.fedct@gmail.com

Phone: (203)751-0199

There was a discussion regarding Alan Gunzberg, who had registered by the deadline. Amy Ruell had facilitated the voting process, and a poll was taken to allow Allan to vote. Yes, was unanimously approved.

New Business:

Vote on Amendment to Constitution:

Amendment of the constitution, Article IV. The amendment is being made. It was read on Saturday, October 31, and reread on Sunday, November 1, 2020 by President Maryanne Melley. Voting approval had taken place on Sunday, November 1, 2020. Which was unanimously accepted.

Meet the Blind Month: President Maryanne Melley

Maryanne reported on the Southern Chapter’s meeting. She said that it was great in that there were four persons with diverse backgrounds who were from the sighted public. The four individuals would ask the members questions about blindness. The Courtesy Rules of Blindness were placed on the NFB of CT’s Facebook Account, and the Berlin Lion’s Roar Newsletter along with When You Meet a Working Guide Dog Team. In addition, Maryanne shared that the Central Connecticut Chapter had a meeting, which they discussed and clarified the Courtesy Rules of Blindness to get a better understanding to share with others.

Subsidy Committee:

Very brief and positive discussion. Nathanael, Mary, and Beth will continue to facilitate the Scholarship Fund Committee. Marchele had made a motion for Shonda and Deb to be the new chairpersons of the Subsidy Committee. Beth seconded and the vote passed.

Washington Seminar Appointments: Mary Silverberg

A brief discussion on Washington Seminar. Shonda made a motion for Mary to make the Washington Seminar appointments. Beth seconded and the vote passed, with 1 abstention.

Washington Seminar will be virtual next year (2021). The great gathering will be done on Monday, February 8th and appointments will be on Tuesday February 9, Wednesday February10 and Thursday February 11. Flexibility with meetings regarding our congressman and women is encouraged. A good number of constituents are welcome. Four people will be speaking. 1 who does introductions, and the others will speak on matters presented by the National Federation in early January. Maryanne and Mary will be reaching out to people to see if they are interested in presenting. Affiliate members are encouraged to be present at the meetings.

Training will be provided.

Donation Mailings: More help needed!

All willing workers may contact Lucia.

Email: llee@nfb.org Phone: (860)289-1971

2021 Convention:

Positive conversation regarding the return to 4 Point Sheraton in Meriden, CT.

Nathanael made a motion to return to previous convention venue. Shonda seconded and voting passed.

Chapter News:

Central CT Chapter: Deb Reed reported that a counselor came in May to speak on anxiety during the Covid-19. In August, the chapter kept in touch. In addition, the Audubon Society did a special program called: “Birdy by Ear.” Lastly, Amy Ruell and President Maryanne Melley joined the meeting. Blind experiences were shared, and the Courtesy Rules of Blindness were discussed and clarified for Meet the Blind Month.

Jim Cronin – At Large Chapter: Jim reported that his chapter had a Presidential Forum in October. Carol Hicks, a physical therapist, spoke in September. In November, Jim will have someone come from a law firm out of West Hartford. This individual specializes in Elderly Law. In December, Jim is hoping to get a presenter from the Lions Club.

Garry Allen, Hartford Chapter: Reported that he switched over to Zoom in May. In June, he had Bob Watson from NFB News line. A visitor had come to speak on Reiki. Furthermore, for Meet the Blind Month, 2 sighted visitors. One child and one adult.

Philip Magalnick, South West Chapter: Reported having a great year despite the pandemic. They continue to have weekly Wednesday calls, occasionally having speakers. In addition, instructions for technology were given by Honorata. In addition, the January board meeting was well attended. Final remarks, “Look forward to keep going!”

Shonda R. Rosetta, Shore Line Chapter: Reported that they will have their first meeting after the convention.

Waterbury Chapter: Josephina reported having 7 registered members. Gift wrapping is the plan in November at Barnes & Noble.

Marchele Davis: Southern Chapter: Marchele reiterated on meetings throughout the year. In addition, gave highlights on October’s meeting with regards to Meet the Blind Month.

CT Association of Guide Dog Users: Beth Rival:

Beth reported that there were 2 speakers from a guide dog foundation. Smithtown Long Island, New York. Election were held and most positions were filled by acclamation. The elected members are Beth Rival for president, Rob Palaski, for vice-president, Secretary Isabel Rosario, and Becky Ireland as treasurer. Final remarks: Beth is looking forward to those volunteers that are interested in going to the legislative meetings advocating what’s important to guide dog handlers.

CT Association of Blind Students: Isabel Rosario

Isabel reported that the meeting was successful. There were a panel of speakers. There was a discussion on Learning Ally’s College Success Program. New board members are Isabel Rosario for president, Lizzie Cappelli for vice-president, Paige Jury for secretary, and Brian Martin for board member/treasurer.

Brief discussion on next board date.

Nathanael made a motion for the meeting to remain on the second Saturday in January. Shonda seconded and vote passed.

Next NFB Board meeting: January 9, 2021

Meeting adjourned: 1:28PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Marchele Davis

Acting Secretary

Maryanne Melley

President

NFB of CT November 1, 2020 Elections: Facilitated by Amy Ruell

Noreen Grice: Head of the nominating committee and who is from the Central CT Chapter, read the slate of the nominees.

The nominees were:

Maryanne Melley (President), Beth Rival (1st vice-president), Mary Silverberg (2nd vice-president), Brian Martin (treasurer), Marchele Davis (secretary), Veronica Alston (board member), and Deb Reed (board member).

Election Results:

President: Maryanne Melley

1st vice-president: Beth Rival

2nd vice-president: Mary Silverberg

Treasurer: Nathanael T. Wales

Secretary: Marchele Davis

Board Members:

Veronica Alston

Deb Reed