Cambridge Chapter Minutes, February 13, 2023

The February meeting of the Cambridge Chapter was held as a hybrid meeting at Cambridge Citywide Senior Center and on Zoom. It was called to order at 6:03 PM.

In Attendance:

Helen Kobek

Cristine Diaz

Kobena Bonney

Shirley Dorris

Sengil Inkiala

Blaine Heard

Elizabeth Ann Johnson

Cullen Gallagher

Laurie Mattioli

Masha Sten-Clanton

Al Sten-Clanton

Shara Winton

Mika Pyyhkala

David Ticchi

Kristina Constant

Stephanie Valdes

Jeff Willson

Rashad Saadieh

Allen Larkin

Rachel Kobierecki

Justin Heard

John Oliveira

Jenn Bose

Debbie Malone

Kobena, ElizabethAnn and others led the NFB Pledge.

The January Minutes were accepted as written.

Mika presented the treasurers report. We had minimal activity this month. We had our standard $50 PAC contribution. Mika is working with Kobena on transferring some of our funds to the state, as we have transition to keeping most of our funds in the affiliate account. This makes things easier for filing taxes. Our current account balance is 7,673.42. The funds should be transferred to the affiliate by the time of the state convention, so the balance next month will be lower. However, the funds still benefit the Cambridge Chapter. For example, the state sent reimbursement checks for Washington seminar. We have not received any more walk donations, but those typically slow down after the holidays.

Cullen moved that the treasurers report be excepted, the motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

We have a fundraising committee. They have not met yet, and Justin will appoint a chair. We will have more fundraisers to continue to boost our income. Shirley, Stephanie and Elizabeth are on the committee.

Shirley has a Pampered Chef fundraiser going on now, all of the money raised will go to the national Federation of the blind of Massachusetts. The information has been posted to our listserv. Pampered Chef sells a lot of accessible cooking gadgets, utensils, and various oils and seasonings. There is one more week remaining to get your orders in.

Justin presented highlights from the February presidential release. You can access this release at the following link: https://nfb.org/sites/nfb.org/files/2023-02/pr524\_february\_2023\_final.mp3

Early bird registration for the state convention has ended, but standard registration is still available. Our room block at the Embassy suites is full. However, if you did not book a room and you need one, contact Shara and she will try to figure something out.

There are a number of exciting activities happening. Stephanie, Debbie and Amalia will be leading salsa dancing on Friday night.. We will have the zoom sessions on Thursday, including a session on IEPs. The students are also holding their meeting that evening and a lunch on Saturday.

Shara announce that we will be having sliders instead of pizza on Friday night. We will also have a game which Stephanie is helping out with. After the dinner and game, we will start learning the dancing before Andrew Johnson arrives to play music. We will also have open mic and karaoke. It is very important that if you want to participate in karaoke and would like a backing music track, you should contact Andrew to let him know what song you want to sing. We will have a philosophical debate on Sunday morning, and Kyra Sweeney will lead half of the room, and Donald Porterfield, our national representative, will lead the other half.

Following that debate, we will hold elections for the five officers and three board positions. The positions held by Karen Dupuis, Mark Paquette and Margaret O'Donnell are up this year. Be sure that you have paid your dues so you can vote.

Shirley is the auction chair. If you are bringing something for the auction, let her know by February 27.

Be sure to bring some cash with you for our 50-50 raffle and other items. The two T-shirts will also be available for purchase.

The parents division is having a bake sale as a fundraiser at a table in the exhibit hall. If you would like to contribute something, you can contact Stephanie Valdes, Liz Lesperance or Shara.

The chapter typically provides some cash door prizes for the convention. Last year, we gave five $25 prizes. Shara moved that we donate 5 $25 door prizes, totaling $125. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

The police escort was discussed. A few members used it and found it helpful.

A few points were made:

There was the concern of saying as a group that we need a police escort as blind people. In society, blind people are often seen as helpless, and we do not want to convey that. It is good that Helen reached out to the police and they are there if we need them, but we also need to be careful about how we are perceived as a community.

Helen indicated that the police are committed to providing the escort. They are concerned about safety in Central Square with ongoing protests.

Shara spoke with President Riccobono about the escort, and he said that this goes against both NFB policy and our philosophy. We are not able to officially endorse the escort. However, this does not mean that someone who wants the escort cannot contact the Cambridge police to arrange it and let other members know about it. It just cannot be officially endorsed by the chapter.

Ax throwing was discussed. Justin has reached out to the location, and they require a $150 deposit, which equates to three people paying ahead of time. Everyone else would then pay their $50. Also, if we tell them that we will have a certain number of people, and someone cannot be there, we would still need to pay that $50. Two potential dates were discussed, the fourth Saturday of April, April 22, or the second Saturday of May, May 13. If you know that you want to participate, contact Justin. It is preferred that you pay your $50 fee in advance if you are able. Justin will also send this out to the list. Please stay tuned for more information.

Washington Seminar was a success. Our legislators seemed very supportive of our bills. When legislative Alerts are sent out, please read them and contact your representatives.

There is an opening for a Federationist on the Perkins Library Consumer Advisory Board. These meetings take place approximately every three months. If you would like to represent Massachusetts on this board, contact Shara by February 20. Kobena represents his work on the board, so you can reach out to him if you have questions.

If you have not paid your convention registration fee yet, you now have the option of using Zelle. This is available through most banks. To send money to the affiliate, use the address treasurer@nfbma.org.

We need to do something to encourage more members to attend our meetings in person. The location committee worked very hard on finding a location to allow us to be back in-person. Shirley suggested a chapter 50-50 raffle or a pizza night as potential options. We would like to know what would motivate you to attend meetings in person, contact us and let us know.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, March 13.

Meeting adjourned at 7:37 PM.