The MAPBC met on Sunday, Aug. 11th. The meeting began at 6:09PM. Those in attendance included:

Jenn Bose

Stephanie Valdes

Shara Winton

Youme Nguyen Ly

Hai Nguyen Ly

Liz Lesperance

Laurie Mattioli

Presidential Release:

Youme went over the August presidential release highlights. Shara encouraged everyone to complete the two surveys created by the national office. The first survey pertains to the monthly presidential releases and how this information can be better streamlined to all members. The second survey seeks feedback from those who have recently attended a national convention.

Minutes:

Youme put forth a motion to approve the July meeting minutes which Jenn seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

2025 State Convention:

The dates of our next state convention are March 14th through March 16th and will be held in Springfield. Shara was in Springfield this week visiting the hotel. The hotel is older and does not have braille in most public spaces. The hotel stated that the lack of braille is because they were grandfathered in but they will look into adding braille. Shara expects an answer by Aug. 20th. Also, there is plenty of space in case we need a room for childcare, but Shara needs to know who needs childcare asap. We would like to have more blind parents and parents of blind children attend our next convention and childcare will be a crucial part of this endeavor.

BELL Academy:

This month's meeting took place after the first week of our BELL academy. Stephanie shared that there are 4 students participating and that the students are all doing well. They are especially enjoying the craft activities. Last Friday, the students walked to a nearby fencing club and then went out to eat. This upcoming week the students will be going to the science museum and will be experimenting with musical instruments. The students are also learning basic cooking skills. The program is demonstrating not only the fundamentals of reading and writing braille but also that it is okay to be the only person in your family or your class or your community that knows braille. Furthermore, the program seeks to show the students that learning braille can lead to tremendous opportunities down the road.

This coming Friday is the open house which will start at 1PM. A councilor from the MCB will be in attendance and will be the point of contact between the MCB and our affiliate’s BELL program. Stephanie confirmed there are enough volunteers for the upcoming week but she would like to have more male volunteers in the future so the students can meet a larger array of blind individuals.

Stephanie has learned a lot from this year. There will be reports and assessments to follow in the weeks after BELL. Stephanie will start planning the next BELL academy in November. The first task will be trying to find a location. There is interest to move the BELL academy outside of Boston next year.

Stephanie shared that part of her responsibility as a coordinator is to see what assistance the children may need once the BELL academy is over. Ultimately this will be up to the parents. Stephanie will continue to include the parents on upcoming events with the NFB of MA. She noted that none of the surrounding states have a BELL academy.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15PM.