The MAPBC met on Thursday, Jan. 9th. The meeting began at 6:02PM.

Those in attendance included:

Stephanie Valdes

Youme Nguyen Ly

Hai Nguyen Ly

Liz Lesperance

Kobena Bonney

Stephanie recited the NFB pledge.

We discussed the November meeting minutes. Hai put forth a motion to approve the minutes which Liz second. The minutes was approved unanimously.

Liz went over the treasurer's report. Our current balance is $150.25. Hai approved the treasurer's report which Youme seconded. The treasurer's report was approved unanimously.

Stephanie reminded us that dues are owed this month. The dues are $5 for the division.

The state convention is quickly approaching. Shara has encouraged everyone to reserve their rooms as our room block filled up last year. No one in our division needs transportation assistance. We would like to meet at the state convention. We can meet Friday from 5PM to 6PM or Saturday after general sessions. Friday evening appears to be the better choice. Stephanie reminded us that we have a suite for childcare. We would like to encourage individuals to stop by the suite to become more familiar with the parents’ division. Stephanie suggested emailing the listserv to see if there are volunteers who would like to assist with childcare. A member of the parents’ division will also be available at the suite to assist with childcare. This will be a supervised play space with toys, games, and educational materials to teach the kids about blindness. Stephanie will speak to the BELL academy volunteers about volunteering for the suite.

Stephanie has created 2 spreadsheets in our shared folder to assist with MAPBC membership. One is to track current dues-paying members. The other spreadsheet is to track people who have expressed interest in the division but haven't actually attended a meeting. These spreadsheets are saved in our membership folder. Stephanie suggested creating a letter explaining the goals of the parents' division. This letter can be passed along to organizations like the MCB to share.

Stephanie said she would like to devote a portion of each meeting to tips/tricks for parenting. This would demonstrate the support-driven component of the division. Kobena suggested making it possible for attendees to submit their questions anonymously. Stephanie agreed and offered to make her email address available for this purpose.

Stephanie would like to come up with fundraisers that can be done throughout the year (i.e. Mother’s Day, etc.). Another idea is to reach out to companies for in-kind donations. Also, it might be possible to take advantage of a Black Friday deal this November. We could purchase an item which could be raffled off at the following state convention. Stephanie has created a fundraiser brainstorming document so all of the ideas can be organized in one location. For this state convention, we talked about setting up an online 50/50 raffle. Hai also mentioned he would see if he has an item that can be raffled off.

Stephanie provided a BELL academy update. There is a meeting coming up on Sunday. The meetings are focused on the coordination of the event this year along with raising funds. There is a possible location in Waltham that might work for this year's BELL academy. This location is fenced in and there is a park nearby. There is also a nearby plaza. These locations could all be incorporated into the program. A contract is being created that will be sent to the facility that hosts the academy. The BELL academy planning group is now meeting once per month and Stephanie is delegating more of the tasks to others. At this time, 3 families have expressed interest in the program this year.

Last year the national office established the IEP academy. This appears to be a program that will be held annually. The training is done at the national office. Sephanie recommended that all members of the parents' division apply for this program. She anticipates the program will be announced around March. The training is geared towards anyone who would like to advocate for IEP's whether it is teachers, parents, or students. It is an opportunity to gain knowledge about IEP's so that parents who are struggling with this process have more resources.

The next meeting will be Thursday, Feb. 13th at 6:00PM.