**National Federation of the Blind of MA At-Large Chapter**

**May 2025 Meeting Minutes**

The NFB of MA at-large chapter met on Tuesday, May 13th. The meeting began at 6:32PM. Those in attendance included:

Allen Larkin

Brian Langlois

Cullen Gallagher

ElizabethAnn Johnson

Kristina Constant

Kyra Sweeney

Liz Lesperance

Ren Lovegood

Sandy Burgess

Shannon Canton

Shara Winton

Shirley Doris

We kicked off the meeting by sharing our favorite ice cream flavors as our icebreaker activity.

Cullen recited the NFB Pledge.

Everyone had a chance to read the April meeting minutes. Ren putforth a motion to accept the April meeting minutes. Shirley seconded the motion. The April meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

In lieu of a treasury report we discussed the idea of opening a bank account for our chapter. Sandy and Debbie spoke with Kobena about the process which involved having two chapter board members meet at the bank in person which is difficult as we are geographically dispersed. The process also included securing particular documents pertaining to our affiliates 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. It was ultimately decided that, at this time, our chapter does not raise enough annual funds to justify opening our own bank account. Instead, we will continue to hold any funds raised in the affiliate account and our chapter treasurer will keep track of our current balance.

Shara went over her affiliate president’s report which included the following highlights:

-the national convention is just a few months away. It will take place from July 8th through the 13th in New Orleans. Shara confirmed which members in attendance plan on coming to the convention. On Wednesday, May 14th there will be a meeting in the evening to discuss whether or not our affiliate will have a table in the exhibit hall.

-any individuals who receive a stipend from our affiliate to attend the national convention are expected to attend all general sessions, to attend the banquet, and to work a shift at our affiliate table if we decide to have one.

-special congratulations to Ren who is receiving a Kenneth Jernigan scholarship

-the Cambridge chapter walk will take place on Skunday, Oct. 5th

-on Tuesday June 17th the MFA will offer a tactile tour of their exhibit “Witnessing Humanity- the Art of John Wilson”. Shara would like to make this an outing for all who can attend. The tour begins at 1:30 and will last about 90 minutes. Shara suggested having a late lunch/early dinner after the tour. To sign up for the tour, please email

[access@mfa.org](mailto:access@mfa.org)

-the next affiliate board meeting will be held in the evening of June 17th

Next, Kyra shared with us that on Wednesday, June 4th the NFB of MA will hold a day at the state house where we will meet in person with legislators in support of our legislative priorities. In particular, we will be seeking support for H.1852/S.1164, a bill to protect disabled parents’ rights in the juvenile and family court, as well as drawing attention to state public accommodations which need amendments to better protect the rights of guide dog users discriminated by rideshare companies. We plan to be at the state house from 9:00am to 4:00pm. If you are interested in joining please email Kyra at

[Kyra.sweeney94@gmail.com](mailto:Kyra.sweeney94@gmail.com) and CC Shara.

Liz added that per Shara’s recent email Senator Edward’s office is seeking written testimony in support of the parents’ rights bill mentioned above. The written testimony must be submitted by June 21st and can be emailed to

[Christianna.Golden@masenate.gov](mailto:Christianna.Golden@masenate.gov) as well as [Grace.Giordina@masenate.gov](mailto:Grace.Giordina@masenate.gov)

We then held our chapter elections. Our newly elected slate of officers is as follows:

Chapter President - Liz Lesperance

Chapter Vice President - Sandy Burgess

Chapter Secretary – Cullen Gallagher

Chapter Treasurer - Allen Larkin

Chapter Board Member – Kristina Constant

Please note, Allen is still our chapter liaison for the affiliate board

Cullen played for us the May presidential release recap. The highlights include:

-the time is now to egister for the national convention. Rooms are still available at the Mariott which is the main hotel as well as at the Sheraton which is the overflow hotel.

-now is also the time to get resolutions into the Resolutions Committee prior to the national convention. Resolutions are due by June 8th and should be emailed to [resolutions@nfb.org](mailto:resolutions@nfb.org)

-the Give $25 campaign is back. All are encouraged to donate or spread the word about the meaningful work performed by the NFB. The first 100 people who donate $100 or more wil receive a pair of After Shokz headphones. Everyone who enters has the chance to win a free trip to the 2026 national convention in Austin, TX or accept a cash prize. An anonymous doner is matching the first $25,000 in donations.

Shara shared that on Sunday, June 1st the Honeygrow Restaurant in Peabody will hold a fundraiser for the NFB of MA. Shara will be sharing a code that patrons should use when dining at the restaurant or placing an order through doordash. Twenty percent of all sales placed using the code will go to the NFB of MA. This restaurant also has a location closer to Boston and Shara will follow up with this location as well.

Liz discussed our affiliate’s current lawsuit against the Massachusetts Dept. of Agriculture. This lawsuit stemmed from a local horse ranch discriminating against a blind person who was interested in doing a guided trail ride. With the assistance of Al Elia at Disability Law United it was discovered that this is a systemic issue across the state, therefore, the affiliate board has agreed to take on this issue. The lawsuit was filed approximately three weeks ago.

We discussed what date and time would be best for our monthly meetings. It was ultimately decided that the second Tuesday at 7:00PM works best for most. The meeting time was voted on and approved unanimously.

Liz discussed plans for future meetings and mentioned having speakers with special interests join the meeting along with various leaders from the NFB and other blindness communities.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, June 10th at 7:00PM via zoom. Cullen will come up with the icebreaker and Kristina will recite the NFB pledge. The meeting adjourned at 7:46 PM.