NFBF State Board Meeting February 9, 2014

Present: Dan Hicks, president; Peter Cerullo, 1st vice-president; Denise Valkema, 2nd vice-president; Lenora Marten, secretary; Gloria Hicks, treasurer; Johnnie Slayton, board member; Jim Ellsworth, board member; Miranda Kilby, board member; Paul Martinez, board member

Meeting called to order 8:03pm

Motion by Denise to accept minutes as e-mailed. 2nd by Gloria. All Approved.

Gloria gives treasurer’s report: As of January 31st, our operations account balance is $11,632.56. Expenses from convention and Washington Seminars are still coming in. Our newsline account balance is $43,410.51. We are waiting on a report from Scott White concerning newsline. The approximate balance of our investment account is $169,800. The statement should be in the mail and Gloria should receive that soon.

Motion by Peter to accept treasurer’s report as given. 2nd by Jim. All Approved.

Gloria suggests we change our meeting dates to later in the month, possibly the fourth Sunday. That way she would have more time to prepare and have more detailed treasury information for the meeting.

Dan gives president’s report: We’ve been really busy with convention, Washington Seminars, etc. One of the problems we had at convention concerns the vending resolution. Larry Ball wrote the resolution and gave it to Dan in print. Dan cut the resolution down to shorten it. Originally, the resolution called for the governor to be involved, but the new DBS director has not had a chance to review the program. So, the clause requesting review by the governor has been changed to review by DBS. There were a few problems in the daycare which we will talk about at a later time. We’ll also talk about the issues with Kevin Inman. Washington Seminars went well and everyone did a great job. The meetings were well organized. Johnnie, as a first timer, did an excellent job. Also, Denise Roberts and Miranda Kilby spoke well. Our only issues were in trying to make the appointments. However, that gets more difficult every year and we just need to start earlier and be persistent. The Vision Summit is coming up soon and this is an opportunity to let the legislature know what our issues are, what our needs are, capabilities etc. This is one of the largest caucuses in Tallahassee and we hope to see it grow.

Dan asks for committee and division reports: Lenora reports that the newest state fundraiser will be a 50/50 raffle with the drawing to be held at the NFB National Convention 2014 in July. The tickets will be sold at 1 for $5, 3 for $10. Larry Marten has been busy calling chapter and division presidents plus getting the tickets ready for mailing. Everyone should have them soon. How to disperse the money is discussed. Dan reminds that it will be a four-way split after expenses, which will not be that much. One-half will be divided between two winners. The remaining half will be split between chapters/divisions and the state affiliate after expenses. Lenora asks if we are planning on designating a prize for the chapter/division who sells the most tickets. Larry suggests we offer a room at the next state convention. It would not take away from the prize pool as we would furnish the room through the hotel contract. We do have some complimentary rooms and this would not take away from another room the chapter/division may or may not receive.

Motion by Lenora for the chapter/division who sells the most tickets at our NFBF 50/50 raffle receives a room at our next NFBF state convention 1015. 2nd by Gloria. All Approved.

Lenora suggests we have an events committee meeting soon for national convention to discuss the hospitality suite, door prize, information tables, exhibit hall tables, activities, and opening ceremonies. Opening ceremonies happens on July 4th. Dan still needs to find out what our duties will be this year. Sometimes that depends on space available at the main hotel. Gloria informs that anything to do with money is a board decision and does not necessarily need to take up time during events committee. Denise offers to once again coordinate the hospitality suite, information table, and exhibit hall table schedules. She would welcome help with the task; if anyone is interested, just let her know. It is recommended people start making reservations for national convention. Pre-registration and banquet should be available soon on the national website. As of right now; Dan, Gloria, Denise, Peter, Lenora, Johnnie, Miranda, and Paul will be attending national convention. Jim will let us know at a later date.

Denise gives legislative report: They haven’t had a meeting since Washington Seminars. She concurs with Dan in that the legislative meetings went smoothly; everything was well organized. The south team was well received on the hill. With the renovations, the hotel was a little challenging. For some, it was a challenge getting back home. Denise has been sending out information on the list concerning FIX Wia and asks that we encourage members to tweet and use social networking on these issues.

Lenora informs that FOPBC has not yet had a meeting since convention and she will give a report at the next meeting.

Paul informs that the students just had their meeting. Tekesha Saffold will be serving as their representative on the legislative committee. They are working on spreading the petition for the TEACH Act. A part of S1356 could move RSA from the department of education to the department of labor. This would also include Division of Blind Services. The other part of the bill would allow sub-minimum wages for people with disabilities.

We discuss convention; what went well and what didn’t.

What went well: With the help of Linda and Jerry, registration went smoothly. Having the ability to take credit cards helped with last minute registrations and the auction. The auction went well; music, food, auction items – everyone had a great time. Daytona did a wonderful job with hosting the convention. They were very welcoming and the hospitality suite was awesome. They’re community outreach during the convention was stupendous. Denise appreciated the speakers, Dennis Baxley, Robert Doyle, Anil Lewis; they did a wonderful job. The minority concerns panel was excellent, as was the deaf-blind meeting. Peter offered several transportation options to assist people in getting to the convention. Lenora informs that overall, families were happy with the hotel and location. We were able to hold our mobility workshop right across the street at Publix. Special thanks to Denise for loaning us her room to conduct the life skills Crockpot workshop. Miranda appreciated the large bathrooms and also thanks Denise for her assistance with the crockpot workshop. Paul thanks the board for providing the student division with a room. That really helped get some additional students to convention. The bowling event went well. They received $80 back from the bowling alley for their fundraising event. Everyone had a great time. Leonardo, David Evans, and hotel staff did a great job with the sound including the devices for deaf-blind. Johnnie informs that her vice-president, who had stopped going to convention ten years ago, said that this was the best convention she had ever been to. Tallahassee had four new attendees and they appreciated the camaraderie among our NFB family. Other than a few issues, the hospitality suite was great and accommodating. There were plenty of snacks, drinks, and room to sit and chat. The hotel staff was accommodating with assistance, they were there to help people check in, check out, and get to where they needed to go. Johnnie informs that the photo booth didn’t work out this time, but the idea will be pursued for future conventions. Dan really liked the location of the hotel. He commends Peter and the chapter in their efforts to get some publicity for our convention.

What did not go well: Dan explains that we need to hear about what did not go well so we have the opportunity to address problems and improve in the future. Unfortunately, we ran out of Braille agendas which should never happen. We need to make sure that doesn’t happen again. In fact, our runner-up scholarship winner was unable to get a Braille agenda. We also need to work on getting a Spanish agenda. There was some confusion with the ballroom space and the hotel staff. For parts of the convention, they didn’t seem to understand what we were doing. They did not set up the banquet room correctly. The state board table was set up in front of a group of empty chairs away from the rest of the banquet. Lenora informs the manager on duty told her “But you can hear from anywhere in the room.” She feels they were extremely disrespectful to our group to assume that just because we can’t see, they could be lazy and not switch the room around. Dan reminds that everything was written down and our directions should have been followed. There were some transportation issues. Although he offered several transportation options to assist people in getting to the convention, the information needed to be more widespread. Specifically, putting that information out to the list in addition to phone calls to presidents and committee conference calls. We also had an issue with the complimentary breakfast offered by the hotel. Initially, they were only going to allow two tickets per room, which left out many people including children. Dan did get a lot of complaints about the breakfast not being a hot breakfast. Gloria informs that a hot breakfast was in the contract, but upon arriving at the convention, Sharon said that the hotel could not afford to provide a hot breakfast and they were not going to honor that part of the contract. FOPBC did have an issue with a chlorine smell in the daycare room. It was right next to the indoor pool and the chlorine smell was pretty bad. Plus, they didn’t have another room to put us in. So, we made do as best we could. There were a few times in which the suite was closed early, and we need to make sure that doesn’t happen. There were two occupied tables in the exhibit hall which were not paid for. We need to make sure this doesn’t happen as that’s how we make some of our money. One was a diabetes group and one was Votran transportation.

Dan addresses the board concerning an issue with Kevin Inman and a young woman attending convention. We’ve already had some information concerning this through e-mail. Paul informs that the scholarship winners were assigned mentors; however, this young woman did not respond to her mentor and did not interact with the student division. She did join the students during the auction, and for their board meeting on Sunday. It is believed her acquaintance with the Inman’s comes from attending school with Lowell. Miranda, who had been assigned to mentor the young woman, and after inquiring why she wasn’t interacting with the students, was informed that she (the young woman) was told the students were nowhere to be found. Paul informs that there were many students at the convention and they were not hard to find. The other scholarship winners had no trouble finding the students. Plus, their information was in the agenda.

The inappropriate behavior occurred on Sunday morning when Kevin went alone to her room and entered. (\*\*Lenora Marten, secretary note: Due to the sensitive nature of this complaint, details have been included in the original written complaint along with NFBF State Board correspondence. As these minutes are a public document, they are not included herein. \*\*) Johnnie states that anyone who knows anything about professional behavior and intends to act professionally should know entering a young person’s room is inappropriate. The behavioral interaction that followed showed that his intent was not professional. Peter agrees, it’s inappropriate, an indiscretion, and absolutely unacceptable. Kevin stated himself that the behavior would not be tolerated if someone had done that with his daughter. The young woman called her parents after the incident and her father immediately called Kevin in regards to how inappropriate he had been with their daughter. When the young woman’s dad asked Kevin “what if this was your daughter,” Kevin said he would be really upset, it would be unacceptable, he wouldn’t stand for it, and action would be taken. Additionally, this isn’t the first complaint of this nature we’ve received concerning Kevin. We received a verbal complaint last summer with a similar issue; however, it was never really dealt with because we had such a huge issue with another Inman at the time. It’s really hard for young women to come forward with these issues which is why most of them go unreported. We cannot discount a complaint if a young woman doesn’t want to put it in writing. As board members, when we are given a complaint of this nature, we need to give it the same weight as if it were in writing. Back to the current young woman; after calling her parents, they came to get her and she left the convention early, Sunday after the banquet. There is concern of retaliation against the young woman. Peter assures that he knows the family and they are, as they should be, very protective of their daughter. Kevin is wrong in his actions and we do need to do something; we need to do the right thing.

We’ve never had this situation before and go on to discuss how we should proceed. This is a consequence of action and we need to make sure we don’t act on emotion. Our constitution does not support behavior of this type. While we are concerned with the integrity of NFBF, it is secondary to ensuring the safety of our young women. Although we’ve had other issues with Kevin in the past, any action we take needs to concern only this inappropriate behavior. As a board, we have the responsibility to protect the safety of our young women as best we can.

Motion by Gloria that Kevin Inman be expelled and is no longer a member of any National Federation of the Blind of Florida chapter, division, committee, or member-at-large. He will not be permitted to participate in any functions including but not limited to; chapter meetings, division meetings, conference call meetings, committee meetings, and state conventions. 2nd by Paul.

Dan takes roll call vote:

Peter Cerullo - Yes

Denise Valkema – Yes

Lenora Marten – Yes

Gloria Hicks – Yes

Jim Ellsworth – Yes

Miranda Kilby – Yes

Paul Martinez – Yes

Johnnie Slayton – Yes

Dan Hicks – Yes

Dan will send the letter by certified mail.

Dan assigns board liaisons for the following year. These are designed to facilitate communication between chapters, division, committees, and the state board. Duties include communicating with the president every month or so, encouraging, and bringing to the board any concerns or questions.

Greater Broward Chapter – Dan Hicks

Greater Daytona Beach Chapter – Peter Cerullo

Gainesville Chapter – Peter Cerullo

Greater Jacksonville Chapter – Lenora Marten

Miami-Dade Chapter – Denise Valkema

Central Florida Chapter – Miranda Kilby

Palm Beach Chapter – Paul Martinez

Pinellas Chapter – Jim Ellsworth

Polk Chapter – Gloria Hicks

Port St. Lucie Chapter – Dan Hicks

Greater Tallahassee Chapter – Johnnie Slayton

Tampa Bay Chapter – Gloria Hicks

State-Wide Chapter – Miranda Kilby

Deaf-Blind Division – Dan Hicks

FLAGDU – Denise Valkema

FOPBC – Lenora Marten

FABS – Paul Martinez

Newsline Committee – Jim Ellsworth

Resolutions Committee – Dan Hicks

Scholarship Committee – Paul Martinez

Minority Concerns Committee – Johnnie Slayton

Events Committee – Gloria Hicks

Fundraising Committee – Lenora Marten

Legislative Committee – Denise Valkema

Dan explains we don’t need a report from every chapter, division, or committee every time we meet. We’d like to hear if the chapter has had an event and how that went, if they have any questions, issues, or ideas. Basically, we’re looking for communication, not reporting.

The 2014 Vision Summit will be happening soon. Tallahassee will be hosting a table to give out information and encouragement. Latoya and Eric will be attending from Jacksonville to help out the Tallahassee chapter. Johnnie relays the chapter is privileged to participate and give out information at the summit. They usually participate every year, but this will be the first time handing out information. Johnnie is planning on attending the reception dinner along with invited guests and council members.

Dan will be contacted by 20-30 people seeking national scholarships. He could use some help with the scholarship letters. Peter, Denise, Lenora, and Johnnie offer to help with the letters. This would also include a phone interview.

If you have an expense, please scan and e-mail receipts to both Gloria and Dan. Also, put ‘request for re-imbursement’ in the subject line. Put a summary of the expenses in the body of your e-mail. He reminds new board members that NFBF does our best to reimburse expenses, but there will usually be some out of pocket expense. We try to keep that at a minimum.

The state-board meeting schedule is discussed.

The next meeting will be on March 23rd.

Dan asks for old business or new business.

Motion by Gloria to adjourn. 2nd by Lenora. All Approved.

Meeting adjourned at 11:19pm