PCNFB Meeting Minutes for February 11, 2016

The February meeting of the Potomac chapter of the National Federation of the Blind was called to order by President John Halverson at 7:05 p.m. There were 12 members and three guests present.

We went around the room and introduced ourselves and each said what our middle name was

Minutes The January 14, 2016 minutes were accepted as sent out without corrections.

Treasurer’s Report There was no Treasurer’s Report.

Philosophy Deepa Goraya led this month’s philosophy discussion. We discussed some possible reasons that some blind people preferred to cover their eyes with dark glasses or other covering when they are out and about. Answers ranged from medical necessity, or the fact that the person may feel more self-confident, or that by covering their eyes, a person would feel more in control of the image they want to project. We were also reminded that wherever we go, people will always be talking or remarking about some aspect of our persona. If not blindness, maybe hair color, height, weight, etc. Another person said that generally she doesn’t cover her eyes because she thinks it’s less awkward for the sighted people we meet, that they have an easier time figuring out where to make eye contact with us. The general consensus is that it’s a very individual decision, and there are many reasons blind people choose to cover or not cover their eyes.

Chapter Member News Joe Hobson was recently hospitalized, but is now recovering at home. For the next couple of weeks, various chapter members will periodically bring him food. Sarah Blumberg and President Halverson will send out a schedule via email and people can sign up for individual slots. We are all eagerly looking forward to having Joe among us again.

Washington Seminar Sean McMahon said it was hard for him to gauge support from the Congressmen and Senators. President Halverson spoke to the issue of filtering responses; just because an enthusiastic staff members says they’re sure the member will support the bill doesn’t make it so. Whereas if an actual Congress person directly pledges their support, we look upon that response as more positive. It was Sean McMahon’s and Carolena Garrison’s first Washington Seminar. Stephanie DeLuca was commended for her efforts in scheduling and re-scheduling appointments.

Richmond Seminar Tracy Soforenko reported that about 35 members broken down into 9 teams with 3-6 people each visited the Virginia General Assembly. There were three issues: Two of a “protective” nature; one reminded legislators of the value and importance of the Randolph-Shepherd Program; the second reminded the legislators to continue to repel any efforts that might be made to combine the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired with the general state rehabilitation agency. The third issue concerned mandating statewide use of the National Reading Media Assessment test for all blind students. The legislation passed in the House Education Committee but was tabled (killed) in the Appropriations Elementary and Secondary Education Committee. Tracy reminded us that this bill had died twice before in that same committee. Tracy said that one strategy missing from our effort is a parent or two who would give public support and speak on the merits of the bill. Alan Schlank suggested that we broaden our approach by involving more people in IEP meetings. This also would have an added advantage of showing both parents and teachers what competent adults that know and use braille on an ongoing basis are capable of accomplishing.

Eric Foundation Grant The Eric Foundation is granting a total of $10,000 for people with disabilities to be used toward the purchase of technology equipment. Applicants must live in Maryland, Virginia, or DC. The application deadline is early April.

Government Cyber Security Website There is now a website through the FCC which contains all the necessary forms and information to report a security breech.

Report on wine tasting Everyone enjoyed the venue for this year’s wine tasting, and those that stayed for dinner continued to have a wonderful time with the excellent food and service. Sean McMahon gave a preliminary report which stated that the chapter cleared $860 so far: $460 from 23 admissions, plus $400 from the raffle. We do not yet have a tally from dinner and wine orders.

Chapter Auction The chapter will hold another spring fundraising auction this year probably in the Party Room at Turnbury Towers in early-to-mid-June, with final details forthcoming at a later date. President Halverson will begin to work on a donation letter for businesses.

Square Application with an I-Phone Sean McMahon moved that the chapter investigate the purchasing of an adapter for $99 so that the chapter could take credit cards for payments, and that the purchase be made if feasible. Sandy Halverson seconded. An amendment was made to give the chapter permission to allow the state to borrow the adapter when necessary.

 The motion passed unanimously.

Leadership Seminar Tracy Soforenko reported that there will be a combination Virginia leadership seminar-state board meeting at the National Center in Baltimore May 5-7. Our fellows will arrive on Thursday, May 5, with the rest of us arriving on Friday or Saturday. We would also use that opportunity to add our plaque that Virginia has 100 PAC members. Arrangements will be made for chapter transportation to Baltimore and details will come later.

Membership Two of our guests, Evelyn Valdez and Carolena Garrison joined our chapter.

Presidential Release No release was played due to technical difficulties.

50-50 Raffle $28 was divided between the chapter and Justin Chan.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Droppers

Recording Secretary