National Federation of the Blind of Washington

Telephone board Meeting

June 14, 2020

Respectfully submitted:

Bennett Prows, Secretary

The meeting was called to order by President Carpenter at 7:03 PM. Board members Present were: Marci, Kris, Doug, Bennett, Corey, Mike and Jim. Buna joined while the call was in progress. Other participants were Vincent and Sunny Ricks, Judy and Chris Jones, Gary and Denise Mackenstadt, Maria Bradford, Kay Kipp, Joanie Delzer, Shawn Callaway joined the call as co-chair of the diversity and inclusion committee. He is the President of the NFB of District of Columbia and a national NFB board member.

The minutes had been distributed before the meeting, and a motion to approve was seconded and passed unanimously.

 Corey had distributed the treasurer’s report prior to the meeting. He didn’t have the report with him, but estimated that we had about $18,000 in the checking account, approximately $9,000 in the savings account, and the investment “Baird” account has approximately $38,000 at the time of the meeting. The treasurer’s report was approved unanimously.

Marci said that there had been a call with state presidents, and announcements about the upcoming national convention will be coming out soon. In order to be able to vote and participate in all activities, we must be registered by June 15th. The participants must be registered to be able to vote during the convention. Our convention caucus will be held on Friday July 17, at 8:00 AM. And may last up to 2 hours. There will be a Rooky round-up prior to the convention, and will be held on July 7. It will be a meeting for explaining what to expect during the convention, and how the convention will be handled including discussion of Zoom meetings, and other announcements. Marci said that the registration list will be cross referenced with the membership list for purposes of determining who may vote during convention activities.

Then Marci introduced Shawn Callaway again and said she had attended a call on Friday concerning Black leaders serving for advancement. She wanted the board and participants to engage in an honest and open discussion of the issue of diversity, as we have the code of conduct with a statement on diversity included as well as President Riccobono’s recent open letter concerning the NFB support for racial equity in all NFB activities and the statement from the national board as well.

Shawn began the discussion by emphasizing that even in situations where someone is uncomfortable working with a person of a particular category, the view of the person is ok, but the idea of our initiative is to make sure that people of all categories, races, religions, gender identification or sexual orientation are welcome as equals in the NFB. Shawn said that the committee members of our diversity and inclusion committee are willing to help with chapters that want to engage in inclusion activities, ETC. We now have our code of conduct, and if people don’t feel comfortable with how they are being treated they can file a complaint with the national office, and the code of conduct has a complete procedure for how complaints of discrimination or any unequal treatment are to be handled. The investigation is handled by a committee, which then sends a recommendation to the President, and he decides how or what will happen as a result of the outcome. Complaints don’t only involve discrimination, but harassment as well. A code of conduct complaint may be appropriate if one member is making another member uncomfortable for whatever the reason. If the local chapter or others can’t handle the issue, the complaint process is a way to resolve the problem through the written procedure in the code of conduct.

During a wide-ranging discussion of what the NFB is doing with diversity and inclusion topics, Shawn was asked for his ideas on reading material, literature, speeches, ETC, and he said he would have some periodical recommendations and would email them to us in the near future.

One point was emphasized throughout the discussion that the history of the organization, and the reasons why we came together and the battles we’ve gone through are vital to our continued growth and successful work for all blind people. We have had our experiences, and need to continue to recognize the broader societal issues including systemic racism, and other prejudices and bear them in mind as we continue to build a stronger and inclusive organization.

During the course of the broad and candid discussion, Shawn said he has noticed some problems dealing with ageism. He mentioned that he had a conversation with Mike Freeman, when Mike expressed his feelings about how he felt as he got older. Shawn said that he wants to make sure that seniors in the organization are as much a part of the NFB as other persons.

Shawn wrapped up the conversation by reciting three things that he loves about Washington. He remembers the parade the Washington, (D.C.) Bullets had when it beat the Seattle Super sonics for the NBA championship in 1978; he won a fantasy football tournament with Russell Wilson as the quarter back and he wants to come to Seattle, experience the rain, and get some King crab legs.

Buna then said that the Kenneth Jernigan Convention fund committee is urging us to record our first convention “memory minutes” to be used during the up coming national convention. The point is to show the positive things people remember about the first of their conventions.

Marci said that the “give $20” campaign is on as well, and that campaign is for donations to any of the national funds, and there will be a winning prize to a donor to that campaign at convention, which is financing and tickets to the national convention next year. That will be given away on Saturday night, July 18 at the convention banquet. Every $20 donated will give the donor another chance to win that prize.

Marci then said that the NFB of Washington convention in November is scheduled and is slated for the Hotel RL. Given the pandemic, we may not have space to hold an in-person convention safely.

Corey moved that the 2020 state convention be made virtual. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The leadership will be dealing with the hotel on the convention contract.

Jim Portillo then announced that he has taken a class on the Zoom app, and offered to help people who need some consultation for various Zoom meetings, including for the national and state virtual conventions.

Buna asked about the BELL program for this summer. Marci said it is being run as an “in home edition” and the first session was held in the first two weeks of June. It was a success with 45 participants. Families can still register for the second and third sessions. We have two families who have signed up for the third session in late July and August. Marci will be calling on some volunteers to help with that session. families can sign up for that.

Finally, Marci thanked all participants in the meeting for the extremely important discussion on diversity and inclusion. She said she would put out Shawn’s email address after registration and other preparations are made for the national convention.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:45 PM.

The next board meeting will be held Sunday, August 9, 2020 at 7:00 PM. (pacific.),