

NFB of SC Board Meeting Minutes  
April 18, 2020

**\*\*Welcome and Role Call:**

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by President Frank Coppel. He reviewed ground rules for using Zoom during this meeting. Debra Canty opened the meeting in prayer. NFB of SC Board members present were Jamie Allison, Ed Bible, Debra Canty, Shannon Cook, Steve Cook, Frank Coppel, Linda Dizzley, Loretta Green, Tiffany Mitchell, Garrett Mosley, Isaiah Nelson, Lenora Robertson, Derique Simon, JW Smith, and Valerie Warrington. Others present were Laverne Addison, Belinda Banks, Dorothy Barksdale, Jennifer Bazer, Shelley Coppel, David Houck, Thom Spittle (host), Tomeki Williams, Demetrius Williford, and Pat and Dale Wolthoff.

**\*\*Reading and Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the December and January NFB of SC meetings were distributed prior to this meeting. JW Smith moved that they be accepted. The motion was seconded and passed by the board.

**\*\*Treasurer's Report:**

Valerie Warrington read the financial report from the past few months. The totals are as follows.

General Fund: \$6931.78. Of that, \$1700 is designated for the BELL Fund, leaving \$5231.78 unrestricted.

Bus Fund: \$2124.00 (not held in the General Fund)

Steve Cook asked about an amount that was read to be paid to the Rock Hill Chapter. He asked for clarification on that amount. Valerie said it was for \$6000. She had deducted it from the account balance already. She only found out about it this week. President Coppel explained where that money came from. He said a check arrived at the Federation Center with no documentation whatsoever. The check was written out to the NFB of SC. Mr. Coppel asked if a grant had come through and if others knew about this donation. He found that Valerie had registered the Federation with the Network for Good. Mr. Coppel wanted to send a thank you letter. Mrs. Warrington researched the nonprofit that the donation came from. When she did, she discovered that the tax ID number was connected with the Rock Hill Chapter. So, that is how it was determined where the \$6K donation should go. Mr. Coppel also said that the Member-At-Large Chapter had its first meeting on April 9<sup>th</sup>. The Sweethearts Dance cleared \$1000 for the NFB of SC also. Mr. Coppel thanked Debra Canty, the planning committee, and the Sumter Chapter for their hard work in pulling that off again this year. Thom Spittle asked about the \$500 awarded to the NFB of SC for the ride share program. Mr. Coppel asked Steve and Shannon Cook to explain how the state got that. Shannon Cook said that the NFB tracks ride shares with Uber and Lyft when people ride with their service animals, whether or good or bad. This is resulting from a law suit

that the NFB brought against those companies several years ago. When a state reaches a certain threshold of rides in a year, their state is given a \$500 award to be used in any way that affiliate sees fit.

The financial report was moved for passage by Lenora Robertson, seconded by Isaiah Nelson, and passed by the board.

**\*\*FCB Report:**

David Houck gave an update to the activities of the FCB. About fifteen students are being trained virtually and that training has not been stopped by the Corona Virus. The *Palmetto Blind* list was reduced from 1100 to 480. This will bring a huge savings to the center. The PB is available on the website and on Newline. FCB worked on booking the congressional appointments for the Washington Seminar, sent invitations for the Legislative Breakfast on February 19<sup>th</sup>, scheduled the new legislative breakfast for next year on February 17, 2021, Brailled business cards for 3 people, brailled Lizard's Thicket's menus, and got Blue Marlin and The Fish House menus to braille. Blue Marlin's menu is ready, but needs proofing. Two of the FCB instructors got new computers. A 3 site license of Guide Connect was purchased to go on Jim Jackson's computer, Eric Swinton's computer, and one for one of the computer lab computers. The FCB leased a New copier, It is much quicker than the old one and has more capability. The chapter dues for 2020 were updated and sent to the national office. Three cctv's were donated; one has been claimed. Since the first of the year, the FCB has brought in \$12,500 in foundation funds, \$240 in braille menus, \$3175 in center rentals, \$180 in memorials, \$47,278 in SC Commission for the Blind training payments, and \$35.30 in Amazon smiles.

The third Pinhole pipe leak by the Conference Room was repaired and replaced. To bypass the pipes and cement in the floor, it could cost \$9500, according to one estimate. Castle Brothers inspected the 2 new AC units that they installed last year. Both units are working well.

Memberships for Chamber of Commerce, SC Secretary of State Division of Public Charities, and sam.gov registration for federal contracts, were renewed. The FCB participated in the statewide seminar, the Sweethearts Dance, the Legislative Breakfast, the Assistive Technology Expo, The Braille Challenge, and The Vision Summit.

**\*\*Legislative Breakfast:**

The first legislative breakfast in many years was held on Feb. 19, 2020. Over 200 people attended. President Coppel commended Ed Bible for heading up the planning of the Legislative Breakfast. The state organization had done hosted a breakfast in at least 5 years, so it was a good time to be reacquainted with the members of the General Assembly and their staff. He asked Mr. Bible for his comments. He said that he did not have anything further to add. He was surprised at the attendance. The

number that showed up was a lot more than he thought would attend, so the food ran out quickly; however, he had no complaints.

Steve Cook asked Mr. Bible a follow-up question on braille menus. Mr. Cook forwarded info from the Local Buzz to Mr. Bible. To contact for braille menus to be produced. He was checking on the status of that. Mr. Bible did not have a phone number for the lady, only a gmail address. He asked Mr. Cook if he had a pphone number for her. He did not. Mr. Bible asked if Mr. Cook would send her an email giving her Mr. Bible's phone number. Mr. Cook said that the information that he forwarded to Mr. Bible was her email and that he, Mr. Bible, could email her directly the phone number he wanted her to have to get in touch with him.

**\*\*Successful Transitions:**

Jennifer Bazer updated the NFB of SC board on the latest news of ST. ST training has gone virtual, just as most things lately. Classes are conducted every day, except Saturdays. Each consultant has an area of specialty that they teach. The billing has doubled. In March, ST billed the Commission for the Blind \$85,000. The Commission was billed \$63,000 for the first two weeks of April. The benefit to doing virtual training is that ST is able to reach more students this way. That has increased the billing, and travel expenses have been reduced from not being able to do in person visiting with the pandemic. The ST program will be conducting the Summer Teen Program for the first time this year. Before Corona, the plans were to train in person, starting with Children's Camp, and incorporating the BELL program into it. Originally, the six week program was to be the BELL program for Week 1 at RBRCCB, the two weeks in Columbia. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> weeks would be back at RBRCCB, ending with the final week at the national convention in Houston. Those plans have been upturned. At this time, Jennifer and the team of ST do not know how the summer will play out. They have created a curriculum for totally virtual training, totally in person training, and a combination of those two. ST was planning to pay RBRCCB for the three weeks of time that they would be training there. The ST program has received praise from others across the nation. Jennifer has received kudos from several entities recognizing the work of ST. Mrs. Bazer also pointed out the opportunities for billing SCCB, which is necessary as to not lessen the funds awarded in the next fiscal year. Within state and federal government, if funds are not used in one fiscal year, the money is reduced in the next year. In other words, programs are rewarded for spending money by receiving more money. Saving money results in less being awarded. She thanked those who had applied as summer employees and mentors for doing so. ST values Federationists who want to be a positive influence on the youth of the program.

Mr. Coppel reflected that he was one of those involved in the original creation of the Summer Teen Program at the Commission for the Blind. It has been a successful program, but needs the Federation philosophy incorporated into it. He also interjected that starting at the august state convention, the financial report for ST will be read by

Valerie Warrington along with the other reports for RBRCCB and the NFB of SC. Mr. Coppel also stated that due to the vast amount of money that ST is bringing in, he feels it is time to implement measures to oversee the director's position. He recommends a committee of five people to advise and review the operations of ST. This will help ST be accountable to the NFB of SC board. He feels it is not feasible to have the whole board being involved in the committee. Mr. Coppel has not asked anyone to be on this committee yet.

Mrs. Bazer asked Mr. Coppel to clarify the difference between a board for organizations vs. programs. Mr. Coppel stated that President Riccobono told both him and Mrs. Bazer that the programs do not have governing boards. However, it may be a good idea to have a committee to oversee operations and finances. Steve Cook asked about the board that ST had. He wanted to know if this committee would replace that board. Mr. Coppel said it would. Mr. Cook then asked if the committee meetings would be open, as the board meetings are. He added a question about if the staff salaries for ST would be included in Mrs. Warrington's financial report. Mr. Coppel said that salaries would be given as a whole. Mr. Cook asked why they would not be broken down, as they are in other meetings for the Federation Center and RBRCCB. Mr. Coppel replied that that information was voted on by each board as to whether or not to read a line by line report, as opposed to doing it in a summary format. Mr. Cook's final question was about how the NFB of SC was financially benefitting from ST. He stated that he did not remember hearing any transfer of funds from ST to the NFB of SC. Mr. Coppel said that the state has not asked ST for money. Several others pointed out that the reception at last year's state convention was paid by ST, which was approximately \$10,000. ST also helped with the post convention bill to the Marriott with a payment of \$3500. The ST program has paid for the van rental to go to the Washington Seminar and has paid for rooms in the past for the Washington Seminar too. It was pointed out that, though a deposit to the general account has not been done, that ST does pay for specific expenses already mentioned and others for RBRCCB too.

#### RBRCCB Update:

Mr. Coppel mentioned the 100/100 club that was started at the December board meeting. Thus far, it has raised approximately \$8000 for the camp. The commercial refrigerator and freezer were purchased with the help of the Salem Lions Club. He reported that the dishwasher does not need to be replaced, just the thermostat. The dishwasher is now good for ten more years. The oven will be the next appliance to be replaced in the kitchen. Mt. Hebron was planning to go to RBRCCB in late March to do some repairs, but as with everything during the pandemic, plans changed. The Salem Lions Club is using the funds RBRCCB gave to reimburse them for the freezer to work on the chimney leak in Osterneck. DHEC is worried about cross contamination with the pool. DJ will come up to the camp next week to give a letter for DHEC's purposes to state that the pool water does not back up into the well, eliminating the likelihood of

cross contamination. Also, DHEC wanted the holding tank at Oglesby to be inspected by June 1. If any repairs are noted in the inspection report, RBRCCB has until August 1 to make those repairs. There is now a procedures manual and an emergency preparedness plan in place too. Copies are being kept at both RBRCCB and the FCB. There have not been any cancellations for summer rentals at this time. ST has made a donation of \$10,000 in advance of their summer rentals to help carry the camp through until then. Because Fun Day was cancelled and is not likely to occur in person, the RBRCCB board decided in their meeting earlier today that there will be a Fun Day online auction held from October 31 to November 7. RBRCCB Resident Manager Linda Bible is doing well. She is still making progress on recovering from the strokes she had last year.

#### Midlands Gives:

Midlands Gives will take place on Tuesday, May 5, 2020. Just as with last year, there will be a competition among the NF B of SC districts. There will be a focus on the Power Hour, which RBRCCB won last year. The Power Hour award amount is \$2000 this year. All transactions will be done online. The minimum contribution amount is \$10, down from \$20 last year. Each donation will be counted for the district in which the donor lives, unless otherwise specified. There will be people available to help with the online donations if needed. Steve Cook will post the links on the website when he gets them.

#### Corona Effects:

The leadership seminar scheduled for May 9, has been cancelled. It would be held later in the year. The students will develop and plan it. Mr. Coppel called on Derique Simon to comment. Mr. Simon stated that the students wanted to wait until they could plan a quality event, and not do something to stay on a predetermined schedule if the quality was poor. As mentioned earlier, Fun Day was cancelled. The May 30<sup>th</sup> statewide picnic had to be cancelled also.

#### State Convention:

The plans are to still hold the state convention as things stand now. Mr. Coppel stated that the hotel is willing to work with the NFB of SC in any way they can, given the current situation with the pandemic uncertainty. He asked for feedback and thoughts. Debra Canty asked if we could consider doing what national is planning by having a virtual convention. Mr. Coppel stated that he is not sure how well the convention would be attended. There would need to be lots of preparation and training in advance to ensure our members could get on the call. She also asked about possibly postponing the convention until later in the year or next year. Mr. Coppel said that he is not ready to ask the board to make a decision today, but wants to start a conversation. Mr. Bible suggested having the convention in person and virtually, for those who are not comfortable with being in person. Shannon Cook asked the board to also consider how voting could be handled virtually. Also, how would we be able to confirm that someone

is eligible to vote if participating virtually. Fiffiny Mitchell offered a suggestion from a conference call she was on where one affiliate was doing the voting byrole call. She also said they determined eligibility for voting based on theregistration list, which had to be in two weeks prior to the convention. President Coppel said that several things should happen. One is that Thom Spittle (Membership Chair) and David Houck collaborate on reviewing the membership lists to be sure they have the same information. Mr. Coppel said that he feels only dues-paying members should be permitted to vote. He proposed a deadline of July 1, 2020 to have dues paid in order to vote at the August convention. Jennifer Bazer expressed concern that a role call vote would eliminate the anonymity of the voting, and some members may be unduly influenced by others' votes. Mr. Coppel agreed that he was not sure how to keep voting anonymous with a virtual convention. Thom Spittle proposed that the CSTD would do research to find alternate methods of voting electronically and by phone. Using a system like Call Em All would allow for the NFB of SC to only call those members who have paid dues. He felt confident that a means for voting could be worked out for the state convention, if held virtually. Mr. Coppel also suggested condensing the convention into one day, either at the hotel or the Federation Center to minimize the contact among attendees. Whichever plan is decided, other than an in-person convention, Mr. Coppel will confirm with President Riccobono that plans will meet the guidelines and approval of the national office. Linda Dizzley asked if voting were done electronically, would there be a paper trail and how many people would oversee the voting. Mr. Coppel asked Mr. Spittle to answer. He said that call Em All gives results by phone number. They are available shortly after all calls have been completed. There would be a record of votes based on phone number to avoid any discrepancies. Laverne Addison stated that there will be a national membership call this afternoon with Jeanie Massay at 4:00 p.m. addressing issues surrounding voting. Shannon Cook pointed out that each voting member would only have one number registered to call . So it would be one person, one call, one vote. Steve Cook suggested doing test calls to make sure the system works like it should. Before moving on to other topics, Mr. Coppel would like to have a follow up meeting on Monday, June 1 to decide on the state convention being in-person or virtual. The meeting will be at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom. A short RBRCCB meeting will follow.

Thom Spittle asked if the hotel will allow the NFB of SC to reduce the number of rooms in the room block, or cancel altogether. Mr. Coppel will speak with someone at the hotel in the coming weeks and will gather that information before we meet in June. Pat Wolthoff shared that she hopes to be able to meet in person. It is such a vital part of her convention experience each year to be able to have face to face interactions with her fellow Federationists.

**\*\*NFB of SC Connects Meeting Concerns:**

Mr. Coppel was discouraged that not more people had attended the Connects meetings that have been held on Thursday afternoons at 5:00 p.m. He feels that our

affiliate membership is so isolated from one another that we need to come together in some way. Many people, especially those not online, are not aware of events and announcements. The Connects meeting is a great way to come together and get the same information at the same time. He encouraged the leaders to make sure their members know about the meetings and how to call in. Mr. Coppel also asked the board members to be present at these meetings. Shannon Cook suggested using Call Em All to notify all members of these meetings. Linda Dizzley presented an option for Frank to call in when chapters are meeting on Zoom or conference call to provide updates then too. Belinda Banks informed the board that it took the Spartanburg Chapter 30 minutes to get their members on the call, just to be able to conduct the meeting. Tiffany Mitchell said that using Call Em All is helpful in conjunction with putting things on the listserv, but we all need to reach out to our members to keep them posted on events. Several more people made comments dealing with how to enter the Zoom information in a phone to be able to save it as a contact, suggesting that the Connects meetings have specific topics, using Call Em All to disseminate info to our less-connected members, signing up people for Newslite to access the NFB of SC channel, and having the Connects meetings consistently every Thursday to help people remember it.

**BELL:**

The BELL Academy will be virtual this year. Parents pick one two-week session out of three dates being offered. The materials will be mailed in advance. The coordinator will check in daily with each student. NFB of SC is still deciding how to conduct the BELL program, but more will be forthcoming about the plans.

**Next Meeting:**

The next meeting will be held on June 1 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned by President Coppel and closed in prayer by Ed Bible.

Submitted by,  
Shannon Cook  
NFB of SC Secretary