

NFB of SC Special Board Meeting Minutes
July 25, 2020

****Welcome and Roll Call:**

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by President Frank Coppel. JW Smith opened the meeting in prayer. President Coppel announced before the meeting got underway, that he decided to keep this meeting open, though it had been discussed previously to close it. He said that the NFB of SC has nothing to hide, and all meetings, except for the nominating committee, have customarily been open.

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 Belinda Banks, Jennifer Bazer, Shelley Coppel, Parnell Diggs, Matthew Duffell-Hoffman, Allontate Ellerbe, David Houck, Linda Miller, Drew Robinton, Neal Sheth, Thom Spittle, Demetrius Williford, Joy Wilson, and Pat and Dale Wolthoff.

****Minutes and Treasurer's Report:**

Debra Canty moved, Ed Bible seconded, and the board passed the motion to dispense with the minutes and Treasurer's Report for this meeting.

****Ground Rules:**

President Coppel stated some rules to help keep the meeting in order. First, he said to state your name when you wish to speak, since it can be hard to distinguish voices on Zoom when multiple people are trying to speak at once. Second, he asked that the board be courteous and respectful to one another. Lastly, he asked that whatever is decided, even if it is not the way an individual wished the vote to go, please abide by the decision of the board and support it once the decision has been made.

****Meeting Purpose:**

The purpose of this special meeting is to decide if elections will be held at the state convention or deferred until a later time.

****Reading of Constitution Articles Pertaining to Voting and Elections:**

President Coppel read Article III, Section 3 in the NFB of SC state constitution, which reads ...

“Any person who is not affiliated with a local chapter or division may become a voting member of this organization by receiving a majority vote of the voting members present and voting at a convention or by complying with requirements established by the Board of Directors.”

****Review of Article III, Section 3 of the NFB of SC State Constitution:**

Mr. Coppel read the article section (above) brought up in an earlier board meeting that was in question regarding voting. Loretta Green asked if someone wanted to join a chapter or division, is the president of that chapter or division required to acknowledge them as showing interest. Mr. Coppel said that that would be the case. Mrs. Green asked if the individual could just claim membership. That was not permitted without having paid dues. They would also need to attend meetings, whether in person, or by Zoom. Mrs. Robertson asked about people signing up by July 1, 2020 just for the purpose of voting at the state convention. She did not feel that was right; it would skew the votes. Mr. Simon, who is also the president of the SC Association of Blind Students, simplified the issue by stating that the board met on June 1 and set forth guidelines for what would be required for someone to vote at this year's state convention. It was agreed that if dues were paid by July 1, 2020, and they registered by July 31, 2020, they would qualify to vote. These are allowances made in the constitution and the board has agreed to them. Mr. Simon asked President Coppel to read Article XII regarding dues. Mrs. Green said that she thinks part of the confusion is that, if a person paid dues, but had not joined a chapter or division, they only meet part of the requirements for membership. Mr. Coppel rebutted by stating that the members that are being questioned are actually members of a division or a chapter. He stated further that this proposed protocol was discussed at the NFB of SC April 18th board meeting and voted on at the June 1st meeting, and there weren't any disagreements, objections, or concerns posed then about this exact issue. Mr. Simon said that he is not sure what the issue is. It seems that there is a question as to whether or not someone is a member who has paid dues, but not recognized by that president. He said SCABS, not only are the members recognized, but they are on committees and participate in the activities of that division. Mr. Bible said that since launching the Member at Large Chapter in May, some of those who were Members at Large on the state level, but not attached to a chapter or division, have joined that At-Large Chapter. Mr. Coppel asked for former state president Parnell Diggs to comment on the NFB of SC state board's constitutional role in voting in members at large in years past. Mr. Diggs said that the constitution has had very few changes since Dr. Jernigan helped Mr. Capps rewrite it in 1989/1990. The member at large stipulation came from that time, before there was a chapter for people not affiliated with an existing chapter or division. He said that Dr. Jernigan advocated for using the policies in the state constitution to give reasons to include people in membership, not find ways to exclude them from it. Mr. Nelson asked then, what is to be done about people signing up for membership, voting, and then not being heard from again until the next year's convention. He said that it is no good to have an organization of 1000 members, but no one around to participate. Mr. Coppel said that there is a certain amount of that happening, even with the best intentions, but as Mr. Diggs stated, the overall goal is to bring potential members in and offer them a seat at the table, not to exclude them altogether. Neel Sheth asked to speak. He expressed his thoughts that the way to grow the organization is not to make people feel uninvited or excluded. He said that there may be a need for some diversity initiatives, information on how to connect with a

local chapter, or some other way to be a positive influence on potential members and build up the membership. Mr. Diggs pointed out the students from 20-30 years ago are now leaders in the NFB, NFB of SC, and in other arenas of the blindness community in the US. So, the NFB of SC can be a breeding ground to cultivate new talent, strong motivation, and long-term involvement. Mr. Bible further commented that he agrees there should be a cut-off date for paying dues. Doing so will help to stop people from signing up at the last minute just to vote.

****Clarification on Meetings:**

President Coppel clarified that the meeting held on July 2nd was technically not constitutional. Article VII states that meetings can be called by the state president, or by a call of 8 of the 15 board members both signed and in writing. Mr. Coppel said that he had some questions about the meeting being called by board member Tiffany Mitchell, but he went along with it. This article clarified that it was not in line with the constitutional policies. Mr. Simon recommended that new board members be required to read the constitution and sign a statement that they have done so. It would avoid unnecessary situations, such as the July 2nd meeting. He said that the meeting was not fair to anyone who was not on the Connects call just prior to the meeting being requested. Mrs. Dizzley asked that amendments be done during the state convention or the statewide seminar. Mr. Coppel said that provisions for making amendments to the state constitution were outlined therein.

****Voting Options:**

Mr. Coppel reviewed the platform that the national organization used for voting, which is Excite M. This requires those wishing to vote to have registered for the convention and to have registered separately to vote. When votes were called, the individual had to dial in and place their vote by telephone or text. Mr. Coppel has been in touch with John Berggren at the Jernigan Institute for contact information for Excite M. He also proposed having elections Sunday afternoon to allow ample time for the voting to take place. Call Em All could be Plan B. Jamie Allison asked how the process for Excite M could work for people with only one phone with less technical skills. Mr. Coppel said that President Riccobono commented that no system is perfect. There will likely be some issues, but everyone is doing the best they can. Mr. Sheth suggested having test votes to get people accustomed to the way they will vote. Mr. Coppel wanted to be sure that everyone knew that the calculation is done by the voting platform, whether it is Excite M or Call Em All. The only part members in SC will have is reporting the results of the votes. Mr. Diggs reminded the board that people would have to register the number they would call/vote from. Mr. Nelson suggested asking each chapter president to poll their members to see who can do Zoom voting, who can vote by phone, and determine from there if it would be best to postpone the vote until the statewide seminar. Having said that, Mr. Nelson said he wanted to encourage the board to hold elections in January at the statewide seminar. Mr. Simon replied that he was unclear why there was a controversy about the elections, since all who attended the national convention last week saw the voting system in action. He further asserted that by deferring the vote, it would make the NFB of SC look weak and incompetent. Mr. Coppel considered that the pandemic may not be over in January, requiring a virtual seminar then too. Mr. Sheth contributed further that the seminar will be during flu season, and that the pandemic may be complicated by the flu this winter. Mr. Cook agreed with Mr. Simon that we should go forward with voting using Excite M as the first choice. He said that if the national organization felt

comfortable enough with that voting platform, there is no reason our state should not. Mrs. Cook commented that the constitution states that elections must be done at the state convention, so the seminar would not be an option. She also said that the discussion about voting boiled down to dialing a telephone, which is not a new concept or skill. If it is problematic for some people, they can get help putting that into their phone as a contact or speed dial. Lastly, doing a voice vote lends itself to more human error than either of the other two options of voting platforms; because one or more people would be counting the votes as they are taken. Mr. Smith asked if nominations could be done from the floor. Mr. Coppel said that there is a way for that to happen. Mrs. Wolthoff said that she feels very strongly that elections need to be held at this state convention.

****The Vote:**

Mr. Smith moved that elections be held at the state convention. Shannon Cook seconded the motion. Secretary Shannon Cook took a roll call vote at the request of the president to determine if the voting will take place at the virtual state convention or be postponed until next year. Votes were as follows:

Lenora Robertson - No response

Debra Canty – Y

Shannon Cook – Y

Valerie Warrington –Y

Jamie Allison – Y

Ed Bible – Y

Steve Cook – Y

Linda Dizzley – Y

Loretta Green – Y

Tiffany Mitchell – Y

Garrett Mosley – Y

Isaiah Nelson – N

Derique Simon – Y

JW Smith – Y

The motion passed with a 12 to 1 vote. Lenora Robertson did not vote due to phone trouble.

****Mrs. Canty** asked if she would be able to be alternate delegate again next year, since the convention was not held in person. President Coppel said that would be up to the board at that time.

****Mr. Cook** asked if the board needed to vote on the platform to be used. Mr. Diggs recommended voting to give Mr. Coppel the authority to make the final decision, given any unforeseen circumstances, but that Excite M is the preferred platform at this time. Mrs. Cook offered to help people get registered to use Excite M if that is the chosen platform. Mrs. Canty moved, Mrs. Cook seconded, and the board passed a motion to give Mr. Coppel the decision-making authority to decide the voting platform for the state convention.

****Next Meeting:**

The next meeting will be held on August 21, 2020 during the state convention via Zoom.

****Adjournment:**

Debra Canty closed the meeting in prayer. The meeting was adjourned by President Coppel.

Submitted by,
Shannon Cook
NFB of SC Secretary