**Pine Tree Guide Dog users**

**Annual Spring Membership Meeting**

Wednesday May 3, 2023

President Pauline Lamontagne called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

Roll call -

Present:

Pauline Lamontagne, President.

Leona McKenna, First Vice President.

Gil Whitmore, Second Vice President.

Merrill Barter, Treasurer.

Linda Porelle, Secretary.

Patty Sarchi, Director.

Ginger Kutsch, Director.

absent:

Sadie Donnell, Director.

Christina Brino, Director.

Additional members and guests present:

Carolyn Bebee, Bruce Archer, Steve Lambert, Jim Kutsch, Roger Fuller, Karen Laliberte, David Laliberte

Additions to and adoption of proposed meeting agenda

Ginger moved and Bruce seconded to adopt the proposed agenda. The motion passed.

Draft board meeting minutes for February 2023 - Linda Porelle.

The February meeting minutes were Accepted as distributed to the board.

Treasurer's report - Merrill Barter.

Linda moved and Lee seconded the motion to accept the treasurer's report as distributed to the board.

The motion passed.

The May treasurer's report is appended at the end of these minutes.

Committee Reports and Discussions.

White Cane Awareness Walk - Update on proposed walk in October 2023 - Leona McKenna.

Leona reported on the April 11. Meeting with Jessica Siderio, Director of Development and Communications at The Iris Network, and other stakeholders. Among the topics discussed were:

the choice to find a more local celebrity to serve as keynote speaker;

ideas for getting donations for lunch, water and snacks from local businesses:

a plan to provide t-shirts for participants with sponsors listed on the shirts;

the decision to use the more inclusive tern awareness walk instead of white cane walk.

The walk will start at IRIS;

Groups can choose to wear or hold signs.

There is no mandatory fundraising expectation, but groups are encouraged to raise funds for the event itself.

Oct 14 will be the date for the event.

Other groups which may be involved include Navitour, NFB, Foundation Fighting Blindness, local police, puppy raiser groups and schools, and Catholic Charities.

This event could reach many people with questions about blindness.

Merrill asked if IRIS is paying for everything. Lee responded that there are potential corporate sponsors.

The next committee meeting will be on May 9.

Website - Steve Lambert and Gil Whitmore.

Steve reported that we're still waiting on an accessible fix for the website form. We will have a separate membership renewal form by next year. He said Forminator has written new code that may fix the problem and Thrive has another form to try if needed.

Gil thanked Steve and Pauline thanked Roger for their efforts on the website.

Ginger was recognized for her outstanding work providing content to keep our site fresh and interesting.

Carolyn again raised the importance of including calendars with meeting dates to encourage member participation.

In answer to Carolyn's question about including officer names in the site's contact information, she was informed that we have emails for president, treasurer, secretary, and info and will not be adding actual personal email addresses.

Carolyn suggested adding board meeting minutes. Linda pointed out that these can be added only after they are approved. They could also be added to our newsletter, which has lots of up to date information.

Steve reported that he has spent time training Christina but ran into accessibility problems with JAWS.

Legislative and advocacy - Pauline Lamontagne.

update on LD1339; A legislative committee is considering a proposal to set up a task force to be charged with creating a statewide commission on disability - Andrew MacLean, chair of the DBVISC, has written a letter that strongly supports maintaining blindness related services as a separate entity. One blind person could be appointed to serve on such a task force.

Roger noted that we need to mobilize to prevent this change from occurring.

Steve pointed out that services like adjustment counselors and hoemakers to be reinstated as well.

Gil proposed creation of a study panel within our group to prepare to advocate for the continuation of separate blind services.

Lee supports setting up a study panel and will serve as chair. Roger, Bruce, Karen and Linda will serve as well.

Membership - Cheryl Peabody.

Merrill reported that we currently have 32 members.

Public relations, publications, newsletter - ginger Kutsch.

Ginger noted several updates including the following action items:

Created a new email group list on Googlegroups.

Purchased retractable banner, and a mounted poster from our Guide Dogs in Action educational series.

Requested several nonprofit blindness organizations to share our educational series materials with good success

Archived 2022 news updates which can now be easily accessed on our website

Fundraising - Christina Brino.

Lee reported that our grant proposal to ACB Maine is still pending, and that it cannot be considered until ACB Maine receives more information about its finances.

Old Business

Update on ACB 2023 convention - Linda Porelle.

Linda reviewed the plans for the ACB national convention that will be held both virtually in late June and live in Schoenberg IL in early July. All ACB members will be able to listen to convention sessions on ACB media. Instructions for voting will be widely distributed.

New business

Setting board meeting date for AUGUST.

We will have our next quarterly meeting on August 2.

Proposal to set up a full membership email list - Linda Porelle.

Linda suggested that a membership list for announcements of upcoming events could be more efficient than listing all of the individual member emails in the BCC field of each communication. chat list Ginger pointed out that we have a groups io chat list but very few members have joined and it's not very active. The membership seems to prefer the current arrangements for group communication. Linda was encouraged to create a distribution list with everyone in the BCC field. Ginger offered to continue to send group emails when needed.

Adjournment. -

The meeting adjourned at about 8:30 PM.