# **Pine Tree Guide Dog Users**

# **Fall Membership Meeting Minutes**

November 6, 2024

Vice President Pauline called the fall membership meeting to order at 6:31 PM via Zoom on November 6, 2024. Ginger conducted the roll call. A quorum was confirmed.

## **Attendance**

-Board members present: Pauline Lamontagne, Vice President; Merrill Barter, Treasurer; Ginger Kutsch, Secretary; and Directors Christina Brino, Roger Fuller, Linda Porelle, and Gil Whitmore.

-Board Members Excused: Sadie Donnell, President

-Other Members Present: Linda Richards; Jim Kutsch; Steve Lambert; Andrea Giudice; Nick Giudice; Coretta Cooper; and Jim King.

## **Approval of Agenda**

Pauline called for any additions or changes to the proposed agenda. Ginger moved and Christina seconded a motion to accept the agenda as distributed. The motion passed unanimously by acclamation.

## **Approval of August 7, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes**

Linda P. moved and Roger seconded a motion to approve the August Board Meeting Minutes as distributed. The motion passed unanimously by acclamation.

## **Ratification of Quarterly Email Votes**

a. Email Vote One: On 8/22/2024, Ginger moved and Sadie seconded a motion to provide funding from the Ellis – McKenna Memorial Fund of up to $100.00 for any PTGDU member who requests reimbursement for travel or lodging expenses associated with attendance at the November 2024 ACB Maine convention. The motion passed by unanimous written consent.

Christina moved and Roger seconded a motion to ratify Email Vote One. The motion passed unanimously by acclamation.

b. Email Vote Two. On 9/16/2024, Ginger moved and Pauline seconded a motion to authorize the PTGDU treasurer to pay $663.60 to Hostgator to renew PTGDU’s website subscription to cover our hosting costs for the next three years, till October of 2027. The motion passed by unanimous written consent.

Linda P. moved and Christina seconded a motion to ratify Email Vote Two. The motion passed unanimously by acclamation.

Email Vote 3. On 10/16/2024, Pauline moved and Ginger seconded a motion that Pine Tree Guide Dog Users approve up to $125 for registration and travel cost not to exceed $100 for Sadie to represent PTGDU at the Moving Maine transportation conference held in Bangor on October 29. Ginger proposed an amendment that Pine Tree Guide Dog Users approve up to $125 for registration plus travel & lodging costs not to exceed $300. Pauline moved and Christina seconded a motion to accept the amendment. The amendment was adopted by unanimous written consent and the motion passed as amended with one abstention. (Sadie did not vote due to a conflict of interest.)

Merrill moved and Gil seconded a motion to ratify Email Vote Three. The motion passed unanimously by acclamation.

## **Treasurer’s Report**

Merrill reported on our financial activities to date. Christina moved and Ginger seconded a motion to accept the treasurer’s report. The motion passed unanimously by acclamation.

## **Elections**

Pauline acknowledged Roger, Gil, and Christina for their dedicated service on the board. On behalf of the nominating committee, Ginger submitted the following nominations for consideration:

- Christina Brino for Director, One-Year

- Jim King for Director, One-Year

- Andrea Giudice for Director, Two-Year

Ginger Called for nominations from the floor for any of the open board positions. No further nominations were submitted. Linda moved that nominations be closed and that Christina Brino, Jim King, and Andrea Giudice be elected as board members. The motion passed unanimously by acclamation.

## **Proposed Changes to PTGDU Constitution**

On August 7th, a proposed change to the PTGDU constitution and bylaws was mailed out to the membership. The proposed change simply replaced the word “telephone” with the word “teleconference” to clarify that meetings may be held by phone but also by computer, smartphone, tablet or other virtual devices.

Text of Current Constitution:

ARTICLE 4. OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

(E) The Officers and the Board of Directors shall be the governing body of PTGDU between meetings of the membership. Board and Membership meetings may be held in person and/or by telephone. A majority of the Board, including two current or former guide dog users, shall constitute a quorum at such meetings.

Text of proposed change:

ARTICLE 4. OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

(E) The Officers and the Board of Directors shall be the governing body of PTGDU between meetings of the membership. Board and Membership meetings may be held in person and/or by teleconference. A majority of the Board, including two current or former guide dog users, shall constitute a quorum at such meetings.

Christina moved and Jim Kutsch seconded a motion to accept the proposed change to the Constitution. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Committee Reports**

Pauline asked for any Additions to the committee reports or Questions. Gil stated that he wanted to pass on the ChromeBook containing the PTGDU gmail account and other organizational information. Ginger will work with Gil to transfer the information.

## **Old Business**

Merrill stated that our membership fee in the Maine association of Nonprofits is due in December. Pauline shared that, through our membership in the Association, we received a free legal consultation which was used to review our Emergency Expense Veterinary Fund policy to confirm compliance with our 501(C)(3) status. After discussion about the Association’s other benefits, Jim Kutsch moved and Merrill seconded a motion to renew our membership. Ginger will send board members a link to sign up for membership benefits. Steve encouraged board members to informally track and evaluate membership benefits throughout the year to help determine whether or not to renew membership in December 2025.

## **New Business**

a. Emergency Veterinary Expense Fund Policy

The policy was distributed to members for review prior to the meeting. It was noted that in June 2021, PTGDU received a charitable donation of $18,500 from the Mary T. & Curtis D. Lovill Trust for the purpose of providing financial assistance to PTGDU members residing in Maine, whose guide dogs require significant, non-routine veterinary services to continue their work. To date, two PTGDU members in need have applied for (and received) financial assistance from the Fund. After a brief discussion about making the funds available to more handlers, Ginger moved and Christina seconded a motion to revise the Mary T. & Curtis D. Lovill Trust Emergency Veterinary Expense Fund Policy to remove the requirement that applicants must be a member of Pine Tree Guide Dog Users. The motion passed unanimously. Coretta will distribute the revised Fund Policy to other Maine O&M Specialists and Ginger will distribute it to the guide dog schools.

B. Brainstorming Session

Jim Kutsch moderated a brainstorming session to generate ideas for PTGDU committee projects and activities for 2025. These suggestions were brought forth:

Membership Committee

-Host an in-person event for members to connect and get more involved.

-Host monthly Zoom meetings where members can get together and share what’s going on in their lives.

-Get more Maine guide dog users signed up as members.

Public Relations Committee

-Go to local schools and present to youth on white canes and guide dogs.

-Host a webinar on guide dog issues, 2-3 hours on topics of interest

-Connect and serve more people by scheduling lunch and learns and other presentations with corporations, nonprofits, and community organizations.

-Find panel or presentation opportunities with other disability-related state or private agencies.

-Do a monthly podcast explicitly about guide dogs.

-Go to ophthalmology or veterinary conventions with a table or presentation.

Publications, Newsletter, & Website Committee

-Build awareness about PTGDU and more widely publicize PTGDU’s news updates and educational materials

-Develop speaker packets and make available in accessible formats and on our website for those who wish to make presentations about guide dogs

-Create educational flyers for doctor and veterinary offices.

-Share Emergency Vet Fund Policy with guide dog schools as well as with Maine’s O&M Specialists and veterinarians.

-Develop general info flyer about PTGDU that can be distributed at presentations and shared with blindness professionals and related organizations.

## **Announcements**

-Membership dues, $20, are due the end of December

-Next board meeting to be held at 6:30 PM, Wednesday, February 5, 2025

## **Adjournment**

Christina moved and Merrill seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting closed at 8:03 PM.