FCB Midyear Board Meeting – Morning Session

September 25, 2021

The FCB Midyear Board meeting was held on September 25, 2021 and was called to order by President, Sheila Young at 10:04 AM.

Invocation was done by 2nd Vice-President Cassandra Jessie.

The pledge of allegiance was led by Cachet Wells.

Roll was called by Sally Benjamin. Those in attendance, in person and on Zoom, were: BRLF, Dolor Ginchereau; CCTB, Sherry Molengraft; FCCLV, Paul Lewis; Greater Miami Council of the Blind, Paul Edwards; Greater Orlando council of the Blind, Leslie Spoone; GDUF, Tom Hanson; Halifax Council of the Blind, Randy Randall; Jacksonville Council of the Blind, Cachet Wells; Manatee Council of the Blind, Kathy Salemi; Miami Beach Council of the Blind, Gabriel Lopez-Kafati; Miami Metro Council of the Blind, Julien Clement; Palm Beach Council of the Blind, Rick Troiano; Pinellas Council of the Blind, Eugene Batke; Tallahassee Council of the Blind, Wanda Stokley; President, Sheila Young; 1st Vice-President, Mikey Wiseman; 2nd Vice-President, Cassandra Jessie; Treasurer, Mark Lear; Recording Secretary, Mary Tyson; Membership Secretary, Sally Benjamin; and John Richards, At Large Members. Committee chairs in attendance were: Access, Anthony Corona; Archives, Elizabeth Bowden; Awards, Barbara Brown; Budget and Finance, Mark Lear; Constitution and By-Laws, Cynthia Hawkins; Convention, Kati Lear; Education and Leadership, Gabriel Lopez-Kafati; Employment, Barbara Brown; Executive, Sheila Young; Fundraising, Dan Spoone; Governmental Affairs, Debbie Grubb; Membership, Cassandra Jessie; Project Insight, Nancy Folsom; Publications and Publicity, Shelley Sawyer; Resolutions, Paul Edwards; and Technology, Jason Goldfield. Chapters/affiliates absent were: Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of Florida, Northwest Florida Chapter of Florida Council of the Blind, Sarasota Council of the Blind, Tampa Council of the Blind and Southwest Florida Council of the Blind.

Committee Reports

Constitution and By-Laws report given by Cynthia Hawkins.

The Committee met monthly on the second Monday. They considered and approved several amendments to the FCB Constitution and By-Laws including those which addressed FCB meeting and voting practices. They also approved the first At Large Council Chapter, CALM. They also approved several constitution and by-laws changes for various chapters and affiliates. Motion was made by Paul Edwards and seconded by Eugene Batke to approve the report as presented. Motion passed.

The President requested that the Fundraising Committee be the next to report and that Dan Spoone then give an update on ACB. Following that update, Leslie Spoone was asked to give updates on the Brenda Dylan Walkathon fundraiser and the ACB Holiday Auction.

Fundraising – Dan Spoone covered the five key fundraisers and the proposed budget for next year.

-Convention sponsorships. Last year $7,500 was raised and $6,000 is budgeted for next year.

-MMS (Monthly Monetary Support), Last year was $5,500 and $4,000 is budgeted for next year.

-Auction – Last year $5,200 was raised and $4,000 is budgeted for this year.

-Walk - $5,500 last year and budgeted $3,000 for our half of the proceeds next year.

50/50 Raffle - $475 last year and $500 budgeted for next year.

Fundraising Budget for next year is $18,000.

Leslie Spoone reported that the ACB Media Holiday Auction will be on November 28 at 7:00 PM Eastern with appetizer auctions on November 26 and 27. All proceeds go to ACB Media.

The FCB virtual auction will be held on Tuesday, May 31, 2022 with at least six items being auctioned after the banquet on Saturday, June 4. The 50/50 drawing will also be held after the banquet.

The Florida Hurricanes raised $5,500 for the Brenda Dillon Memorial Walk. FCB portion was $2,750.

Dan Spoone said that the committee had discussed at length the FCB raffle. It was suspended in 2021 and has been again in 2022 due to Covid, etc. This is the main fundraiser for several chapters and it is a concern that fewer chapters are participating in the raffle. The committee made a few suggestions:

-That the price of the tickets be increased from $1 to $5 each. This would reduce the cost of printing and would be easier to handle when filling out the tickets sold.

-That the chapters pay 35% back to FCB on any tickets they might sell. Due to fewer chapters participating, this would help offset the cost of printing and prizes for FCB.

-Provide one night’s stay at the hotel for the Raffle Coordinator at Midyear Board meeting and convention.

-Have a $1,000 prize and 3 $100 prizes.

Dan asked that Board reps take this back to their chapters so that input could be given to the Fundraising Committee in the spring.

Eugene Batke from the Pinellas Chapter said that they sell between $1500 and $2100 worth of tickets each year. This helps pay for their delegates to come to the convention.

Paul Edwards felt that we should maintain the raffle and that the Executive Committee or Fundraising Committee should have a community call where everyone is encouraged to participate to discuss this topic at length.

Julien Clement spoke in support of maintaining the raffle. Loraine said that they sell 2,000 tickets and is not in favor of the $5 price. She recommended the prizes be $500, $400, $300 and $200.

Mary Tyson was opposed to only paying for one night for the Coordinator as they need to be at the convention and it does not seem fair to put another night at their own expense.

Anthony Corona wants to make sure that FCB supports and encourages chapters to do their own fundraising so that it is not all put on FCB.

Mikey Wiseman suggested that perhaps chapters would be interested in a buy-in to get them more invested in the raffle. For instance a cost of $25 or $50 in order to obtain tickets for the chapter.

Sheila Young asked what the cost of the printing was. Dan said that it was between 500 and $600 and if we went to $5 tickets the cost would be around $125.

Mikey made a motion to accept the report with the caveat that the Fundraising Committee hold a community call within the next sixty days to discuss this matter. Loraine Clement seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Dan Spoone gave a brief report on ACB activities:

-the ACB fall Board meeting will be October 8 and 9, and will be hybrid. It will be broad cast on FCB Media 6.

-convention will be July 1-8, in Omaha and will be hybrid.

-D.C. Leadership Conference will be hybrid and held March 11-15.

-It was announced that Planet Fitness has agreed to make all of their equipment accessible throughout the United States.

- ACB is advocating for the deaf/blind paralympic athlete who could not participate because they were denied a care attendant.

-An audio description gala will be held in November with most of the large companies participating.

Archives Committee – Liz Bowden reported that the committee met on August 21 to discuss the now completed filing cabinet project. The documents have been scanned and the remaining part of the project is dealing with the large number of photographs. The next project will be obtaining and cataloguing editions of the White Cane Bulletin. We currently have ten years of the WCB but would like any previous issues that members may have. They will be scanned in and placed in the archives. All of the data from the file cabinet is being put on the hard drives purchased for the archives. Motion was made by Wanda Stokley to approve the Archives Committee report. Motion was seconded by Cassandra Jessie and was passed.

Awards Committee – Barbara Brown announced that award nominations will not be accepted after April 15, 2022. This concluded her report.

Employment Committee – Barbara Brown reported that they were working on their convention program and their focus this year is on home employment which is very relevant at this time. Motion was made by Mikey Wiseman to approve the Awards and Employment Committee reports. Motion was seconded by Eugene Batke and was approved.

Technology Committee – Jason Goldfield reported that they had been tasked with developing guidelines for the FCB-l Listserv. They reviewed sample documents of guidelines used by other affiliates and voted to adopt guidelines used by the ACB of Texas, with appropriate changes to reflect FCB.

They also discussed their upcoming convention program and are considering a presentation on the social media platform, Clubhouse. Clubhouse is an audio platform for groups, chats and presentations and ACB has a large presence on that platform already.

A motion to approve the Technology Committee report was made by Eugene Batke and was seconded by Paul Lewis.

Sheila Young asked if the guidelines would be sent out to those on the list and if they would be sent out monthly or just once. Jason said that it would be sent out immediately and that it would be sent on the first of each month as a reminder. There being a motion and a second, motion passed.

Project Insight - Nancy Folsom reported that they are working on updating their Facebook page. They are also putting information in the Florida Instructional Manual for educators. In recent months they have primarily been working on the “Saturday school” presentation that they made today. Motion to approve the Project Insight report was made by Wanda Stokley and seconded by Julien Clement. Motion passed.

Publications and Publicity Committee – Shelley Sawyer thanked her committee for their active participation in meetings and discussions. She said that their work was ongoing in their monitoring the website and updating the information on it. They are updating the “resources” section as some of that information is out of date. Updating the Facebook page, etc. She strongly encouraged members to submit articles, poems, recipes, etc., for the White Cane Bulletin. Shelley said that there had been some interest in a Spanish language version of the White Cane Bulletin. This is being investigated.

Sheila noted that the Code of Conduct was not on the webpage and Shelley said that would be a goal for this year.

Sheila asked if our documents; Constitution and By-Laws could be put on the page in a downloadable format. They may already be downloadable but this will be checked by the committee.

Shelley said that some affiliates had asked if their specific constitution and by-laws could be put on the web page. If any affiliate would like this to be done they can contact Kati and it will be done at their request.

Motion to accept the Publications and Publicity Committee report was made by Wanda Stokley and seconded by Paul Edwards.

Gabriel Lopez-Kafati said that the ACB Multicultural group would have a Hispanic subcommittee and discussion of what would be most important to translate will be on their agenda. He will keep the Publications and Publicity Committee advised of their recommendations.

Shelley asked if the developing of business cards for Project Insight would be under her committee. Sheila said that it would with Project Insight input.

There was a break for lunch at 12:00 PM. Roll call will be done when the meeting reconvenes at 2:00 PM.

Afternoon Session:

The meeting resumed at 2:10 PM. Those in attendance were: BRLF, Dolor Ginchereau; CCTB, Sherry Molengraft; FCCLV, Paul Lewis; Greater Miami, Paul Edwards; Greater Orlando, (multiple responses); GDUF, Tom Hanson; Halifax Council, Randy Randall; Jacksonville Council, Cachet Wells; Manatee Council, Kathy Salemi; Miami Metro Council, Gabriel Lopez-Kafati; Miami Beach, Julien Clement; Palm Beach Council, Rick Troiano; Pinellas Council, Eugene Batke; Tallahassee Council, Wanda Stokley; President, Sheila Young; 1st Vice-President, Mikey Wiseman; 2nd Vice-President, Cassandra Jessie; Treasurer, Mark Lear; Recording Secretary, Mary Tyson; Membership Secretary, Sally Benjamin, and At Large Members, John Richards. Committee chairs in attendance were: Access, Anthony Corona; Archives, Elizabeth Bowden; Awards, Barbara Brown; Budget and Finance, Mark Lear; Convention, Kati Lear; Education and Leadership, Gabriel Lopez-Kafati; Employment, Barbara Brown; Executive, Sheila Young; Governmental Affairs, Debbie Grubb; Membership, Cassandra Jessie; Project Insight, Nancy Folsom; Publications and Publicity, Shelley Sawyer; Resolutions, Paul Edwards; and Technology, Jason Goldfield. Those chapters/affiliates not in attendance were Northwest Florida Chapter of Florida Council of the Blind, Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of Florida, Sarasota Council of the Blind, Southwest Florida Council of the Blind, Tampa Council of the Blind and Immediate Past President. Constitution and By-Laws Chair, Cynthia Hawkins and Fundraising Chair, Dan Spoone were excused.

Continuation of Committee reports:

Education and Leadership –Gabriel Thanked his committee members, especially Dolor Ginchereau who is stepping down this year. The committee has a new name, the Education, Leadership and Scholarships Committee. The mission will be to provide education within the FCB community and encourage scholarship participation. They will continue to award scholarships, bring recipients to the convention and mentor them, before, during and after convention. They are also reaching out to former recipients to make sure that they are still involved with FCB. The scholarship application will be online next week. Motion to accept the report as presented was made by Paul Edwards and seconded by Wanda Stokley. Motion passed.

Access and Governmental Affairs - Report by Anthony Corona. He advised that Debbie Grubb wished to pass the torch to him after this next cycle. The plan this year is to have some virtual meetings and as many in-person meetings as possible in D.C.

Voting – Letters have been sent to the state of Florida as well as the 67 county election supervisors to remind them of the requirement to have certified accessible vote by mail systems in place by March 31, 2022.

Transportation – Ron Brooks of the ACB Transportation Committee has suggested a secondary voucher for overflow scheduling of paratransit for medical transit. A study needs to be done on what is currently not working so that a secondary voucher system may be developed. Data is being gathered by Jim Kracht and Paul Edwards, initially in the Miami area, but all input from other users of paratransit systems will be appreciated. Las Vegas has a voucher system in place where a certain number of vouchers are provided and more can be applied for if required. They agreed not to look further into county discounted rides via Uber and Lyft at this time, but to explore the possibility of the secondary vouchers.

Action was deferred on the pandemic resolution brought up last year but a letter of best practices for hospitals is being drafted by Debbie Grubb, Sheila Young and Patti Cordell. A community call will be held to get input on this most important matter.

Motion to accept the Access and Governmental Affairs Committee report submitted by Jim Kracht and presented by Anthony Corona was made by Eugene Batke and seconded by Jason Goldfield. Motion passed.

Resolutions – Paul Edwards

Regarding the resolution about Paratransit Recertification For Permanent Conditions That Will Not Change. This resolution was withdrawn and our concerns sent to the ACB transportation committee to work on as it was felt that they may be in a better position to address this concern.

Resolution FBM-2021-01

This is to provide additional funding to serve seniors who are blind or have low vision. Florida legislature approved $300,000 for seniors in last year’s budget, which was not included in this year’s budget. It is asked that this funding be made permanent. The committee recommends a due pass. This was seconded by Mikey Wiseman.

Mikey asked if Paul Edwards would consider adding the Chancellor Position to this resolution as it is his understanding that they will be over DBS and VR and not the Commissioner of Education. Paul accepted this friendly amendment. Motion passed.

Resolution FBM 2021-02

Enforcement of Voting Settlement

This resolution is because it appears that little to no progress has been made by the state or the remaining 62 counties to implement the accessible vote by mail system as was agreed to last year. It is to make clear to them that we are aware that progress is not being made. The committee recommends a due pass and it is seconded by Wanda Stokley.

Paul said that the pilot counties report and the task force report on this program were of little to no value and did not address the needs of those who would benefit from accessible vote by mail. This resolution will let them know that if they are not compliant by March 31, 2022, that they have violated the settlement agreement and we may take whatever action we feel is necessary.

Doug Hall asked if we could send a copy of the resolution to the Elections Access Commission and the Department of Justice. Paul said that he would accept this recommendation as a friendly amendment. Motion passed.

Resolution FBM-2021-03

Inappropriate Election Department Approval

This is concerning a potential vote by mail option that has not been tested or certified. The person wishing to do this says that he will send a vote by mail ballot upon individual request and the counties would not be involved at all. The Secretary of State has said that this could be approved because it is not an elections system, it is simply a PDF file. We are categorically opposed to such and feel that there has been sufficient time for a certified system to be purchased and installed in all counties, as is dictated by the settlement.

The committee recommends a due pass and it is seconded by Wanda Stokley.

Debbie Grubb asked that when the resolution is edited that the word system is removed as this suggested method of accessible voting is by definition, not a system. Paul accepted the friendly amendment and will make the changes. Perhaps by using the term method or protocol to close the loophole. Motion passed.

Motion to approve the Resolutions Committee report was made by Eugene Batke and seconded by Wanda Stokley. Motion passed.

Membership Committee - Report by Cassandra Jessie.

The primary project was to get the new At Large chapter up and going. CALM (Chapter at Large Members) was formed and has been approved. Cassandra brought this chapter to the board so that they could be awarded their charter as they have exceeded the minimum requirements of FCB.

Cassandra said that the membership Committee makes a motion to accept and welcome the new CALM chapter to the FCB family. Motion was seconded by Wanda Stokley.

Terri Suarez thanked everyone for their assistance, especially Annely Rose who was behind this effort in its inception. Peggy Carpenter thanked everyone as well.

Sally Benjamin said that she had had quite a response from people interested in joining CALM.

John Richards and Liz Bowden will get copies of the charter and one will be sent to Terri for their files.

Motion to approve the CALM charter passed.

The Membership Committee has the roster and the Constitution and By-Laws have been approved. The Executive Committee will approve them formally this week.

The membership committee will be updating the policy manual and plan to increase the number of members required to form a chapter to eight. This will all be discussed at a later date.

Motion to approve the Membership Committee report was made by Wanda Stokley and seconded by Sally Benjamin.

Budget and Finance – Presented by Treasurer Mark Lear.

General Account - $41,810.80

DHSMV – 10,488.75

Merrill Lynch - $524,214.74 (As of the last Committee meeting)  
Merrill Lynch - $537,238.57 (As of this meeting date)

Mark announced that if a chapter uses Office Depot and wants to use the Tax Exempt number they must first submit a form to Office Depot and they will provide a card with the number on it. They also have a rewards program if you utilize them a lot.

The committee discussed easy and efficient ways to get payments to Mark for dues, chapter assessments, etc. We currently have Zell and PayPal available. When utilizing PayPal make sure to choose the Friends and Family option. We are currently unable to use Apple Pay. Mark also checked into using ACH services but this would require a fee of $25 per month for something that is rarely utilized.

Mark said that we handled vouchers for convention via email and it worked well. He will send out reimbursements within the next two weeks for midyear.

990N forms will need to be submitted by November.

If you haven’t registered with SunBiz, make sure to register as a Fictitious Name under Florida Council of the Blind, not as an Entity. If you are having banking issues, please contact him and he will try to assist in clearing it up.

Some funds due to FCB from an estate settlement will be received but we do not know exactly the amount or when they will be disseminated.

It has been noted that it is time to renew the Tax Exempt Certificate and Mark is in the process of doing that.

Motion to approve the Budget and Finance Committee report was made by Paul Edwards and seconded by Eugene Batke. Motion passed.

Convention Committee – Report given by Kati Lear. She thanked the committee for their hard work. The 2022 convention will be held at this hotel from June 2-5 and will be hybrid. The virtual auction will be held on Tuesday, May 31. Six items will be auctioned live following our Saturday evening banquet. Dan and Leslie Spoone work very hard to recruit sponsors to pay for the convention. Goody bags will be handled by Leslie Spoone. Wanda Stokley gets exhibitors for our exhibit hall. Mikey Wiseman is the hotel coordinator handling any crisis that may arise. Sheila Young and Jim Kracht share their considerable convention experience and provide a voice of reason when needed. Sally Benjamin handles registration and Mark Lear pays the bills when convention is concluded.

Convention call will go out on April 1, 2022. Program write-ups are due to Kati by March 15. ACB Media will be streaming from one room and Zoom will be utilized in the second meeting room.

Thursday night will be Karaoke in the hotel. Banquets will be Friday and Saturday evening. Legislative seminar will be Friday afternoon and Town Hall will be Saturday afternoon.

A community call was held in August to ask what people would like to see at convention. The following are some of the ideas:

-Description of committees and what they do;

-Budget and Finance Committee explanation; how does FCB spend and save their money?

-AAVL Alliance Aging with Vision Loss)workshop;

-Social media Workshop;

-Arts and crafts workshop;

-Demonstration of accessible voting and accessible vote by mail;

-Have someone from state legislature with whom we can discuss issues such as accessible voting, Durable Medical Equipment and transportation.

-Internet shopping;

-Labeling household items;

-How we can save on cost of expensive high tech equipment?

It was also suggested that Accessible Pharmacy be considered for a presentation. Sheila Young advised that there had been some interest by APH in making a presentation.

Motion to approve the Convention Committee Report was made by Sally Benjamin and seconded by Eugene Batke. Motion passed.

Executive Committee – Presented by Sheila Young. The Committee has worked hard and tried to come up with new ideas to keep FCB going and our members interested and involved. She stressed that members should call any member of the Executive Committee should they have questions or concerns. We are all open to suggestions or criticisms and also appreciate any positive feedback should you be so inclined. Officer contact information is available on the website.

Mikey Wiseman spoke on how the Executive Committee had grown as a team because of the circumstances that were forced upon us and he stressed that the membership was always at the forefront of any decisions that were made. The Committee was always concerned about how to accomplish things in a safe and accessible as well as inclusive manner and proved that it could be done. He asked the audience to give Sheila a round of applause for her leadership and guidance.

Motion to accept the Executive Committee report was made by Eugene Batke and seconded by Wanda Stokley. Motion passed.

Unfinished Business:

Sheila thanked the committee chairs for having their meetings prior to midyear as it allowed any member to attend who may wish to. If anyone wishes to participate on a committee, the meetings are announced and you should attend one. If interested in serving, contact the chair of that committee.

The Confidentiality Agreement only has to be signed once while the Conflict of Interest must be signed every year. Those who must sign the Conflict of Interest form are: anyone who serves on a committee, who is a committee chair, who is a board rep or who is an officer.

The Post Convention Board Meeting will not be held following the convention business meeting on Sunday unless it is needed. If it is needed because of something that occurs during convention it will be announced.

Sheila stressed that everyone should subscribe to the FCB-L listserv.

New Business:

Information on the D.C. Leadership meetings will go out in October.

Please come up with new ideas for the Community Call.

Paul Edwards reported on the Florida Rehab Council. The meetings will be hybrid, at least for the next few months. Some positions have been filled and the membership is up to 11 or 12 at this time. The newly elected chair is Jorge Hernandez. He represents NFB and has worked with us in the past. The next meeting will be held in October in St. Petersburg. The Council is working on various issues, including problems that RSVF has had in the past year. Covid closed down many vendor locations and there have been some federal dollars available to help vendors to survive. There may be additional Council positions filled within the next few months.

DBS has advised that they had 726 case closures in the past year. Every office met their goals set the prior year. He feels that Florida has the strongest and most effective DBS Rehab Council in the country.

FCB does not currently have a representative on the Rehab Council and it is felt that if we do not have representation by the 2022 convention that we should take some action.

The Constitution and By-Laws Committee has passed an amendment that will allow us to vote in any way that we deem necessary at convention. All officer positions will be up for election.

It is necessary that a decision is made on how to vote in June. There are three possibilities:

-A company that handles vote by phone, but the cost is unknown at this time.

-Vote Now, as used by ACB, at a cost of approximately $3,000.

-Via Zoom in a hybrid manner.

Votes could be counted in the room by using coins to differentiate which candidate a member is voting for.

Paul Edwards said that individuals do not vote, chapters do. He wonders if it is time for us to address this at convention as FCB is the only affiliate of ACB that does not allow individuals to vote. Sheila recommended that we put together a task force to navigate these changes. Paul Edwards offered to chair this committee. Others who volunteered to serve on this committee were Mary Tyson, Tom Hanson, Terri Suarez, and Paul Lewis. Paul recommended that Cynthia Hawkins also be on this committee. Mikey Wiseman made a motion that the Task Force come back to the Executive Committee with at least one recommendation by the second week in January and that a membership call be set up to vote on the proposed voting procedure prior to convention. Motion was seconded by Wanda Stokley.

Motion to adjourn was made by Mikey Wiseman and seconded by Wanda Stokley. The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Mary Tyson,

FCB Recording Secretary