Minutes

GDUI Board of Directors Meeting (Special)

February 3, 2024

1. The GDUI Board of Directors convened on Saturday, February 3, 2024, at 3:00 pm eastern via Zoom.

2. Attendance:

Sarah Calhoun, President,, Present

Maria Hansen, 1st Vice President , Present

Cheryl McNeill Fisher, 2nd Vice President, Excused

Maria Kristic, Treasurer, Present

Lynn Merrill, Secretary, Present

Penny Reeder, Immediate Past President, Present

Cynthia Hawkins, Director 1, Excused

Lolly Lijewski, Director 2, Excused

Olivia Norman, Director 3, Present

Vicky Kennedy, Director 4, Excused

Kay Malmquist, Director 5, Present

Liz Bottner, Director 6 , Present

Joyce Feinberg , Affiliates Liaison, Present

Vacant, Guide Dog Schools Liaison,

Andrea Giudice, Editor, Present

5 GDUI members announced their presence.

3. President Calhoun stated that the purpose of, and agenda for, the special meeting was to discuss one topic with respect to considering supporting the proposed GDUI statement in standing in solidarity with BPI’s peaceful rally during the ACB 2024 convention in Jacksonville, Florida. Motion to approve agenda (Reeder/Kristic) passed unanimously by acclamation.

4. P. Reeder provided to the Board, in advance of the meeting, the following:

The Blind Pride, International (BPI) affiliate of ACB is planning a rally while the ACB Conference and Convention is in session in Jacksonville, FL, to express appreciation to the city of Jacksonville, FL for the many positive steps the city has taken to promote inclusion and safety for all people, to celebrate diversity, and to assure that their citizens and visitors are safe, respected, and can enjoy the rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness to which we are all entitled, by virtue of our being humans.

Below is a flyer which BPI prepared to describe plans for the rally. Below that is a statement which I am submitting for board approval, which will put GDUI on record, in support of BPI and to let all who read our statement know that we stand in solidarity with BPI, in support of civil rights and human rights for all people. Thank you for reading. We look forward to your participation in Saturday’s GDUI Board meeting.

   Speak Up for Your Human Rights in Jacksonville, FL

July 8, 1-4 PM

Jacksonville City Hall Park

Purpose:

Blind and low vision individuals represent an integral part of the wider disability community.  Advocating for our basic rights is imperative to advocating for all human rights.  In this time of change and radical unrest, it is critical to lift our voices in the state of Florida to remind the world we are here and stand strong for human rights for all.

 Tentative plans include:

A. Partnerships with leading human rights organizations, stakeholders in the disability community at large and powerful advocates for disability and human rights

B. Partnering with the Jacksonville Mayor's office and  local advocacy, diversity-focused  organizations

C. As safety is paramount, the Mayor's office has dedicated the resources of the local sheriff's department for security throughout the rally.

D. BPI is working with local transportation companies to provide transport to and from the rally.

E. Since we will be rallying during the height of summer, the Mayor's office will be providing full area misting, water stations and the availability of city hall for short cooling respites

Logistics are in the early stages, but BPI and its partners are committed to ensuring a safe, respectful, and peaceful demonstration while lifting the thunderous power of community voices.

 President Leah Gardner's Note:

While glbtq+ rights are at the forefront of BPI's  priorities, this rally is dedicated to the human rights for all minority and marginalized communities.  BPI promotes inclusivity and the freedom to celebrate self-identity and autonomy.  Humanity is the one common denominator that unites us all.  From the earliest stages of development, it has always been our intent to enfold any and all Acb

members regardless of political, religious or cultural affiliation.

Leah Gardner

Blind Lgbt Pride President

5. Proposed statement:

“Guide Dog Users, Inc. (GDUI) stands in solidarity with Blind Pride, International (BPI)as they plan to hold a rally in Jacksonville, FL, to express appreciation for the many steps that city has taken to honor and uphold the human rights to which we are all entitled, regardless of disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, class, aptitude, or status. Many members of GDUI are also members and allies of Blind Pride, International, and all of us who rely on our guide dogs for independence and safe travel through the built environment,  understand how it feels to face discrimination when we seek opportunities for housing, transportation, employment, health care, entertainment and recreation. We firmly believe that justice denied to any one of us is equivalent to denying justice to all of us. We urge our members who will be in Jacksonville on July 8, 2024,  to attend the rally, and to speak up on behalf of equality of opportunity and safety for all of us. Like BPI, GDUI is an organization that advocates for the civil rights of our members. Civil rights are human rights. We applaud BPI for their courage and strength of conviction, and we are proud to join in solidarity with them.”

6. Motion: That GDUI stand in solidarity with BPI in their planned rally in Jacksonville. By releasing the proposed statement (Reeder/Kristic). Motion passed unanimously by roll call.

7. Adjournment: In the absence of further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:15pm eastern.

Respectfully,

Lynn Merrill

Secretary

\*\*\*end\*\*\*