



April 4-19, 2020 Electronic Meeting “Minutes”

Overview of the April process:

As you know, given the extraordinarily challenging circumstances in which our communities find themselves due to COVID-19, the PoT2 organizers decided to move the scheduled May meeting up to April and conduct an online “virtual” meeting instead. In short, on April 4, we asked members to consider making a pitch for an organization that specifically contributes to COVID-19 relief efforts in New London County, and to submit their names and their chosen organization by email. The 3 randomly chosen people were notified on Thursday, April 9 and given until Tuesday, April 14 to write a maximum 500-word pitch. We employed the survey platform Survey Monkey to present the 3 written pitches to the membership, who had until Saturday, April 18 to read and then cast their vote for their chosen recipient. We discovered these messages went into some members’ spam folders, and so extended the deadline for those non-responders until Sunday.

Prior Recipient Report:

We asked our February 2020 recipient, Phil Pavone, of AZ Pawn Gift of Mobility, to offer a written statement reporting on his use of the \$11,850 donation made in February to his wheelchair initiative.



To the members of Power of Together,

The following is a brief update on "The Gift of Mobility Giveaway" and the use of the generous donation I received. Two weeks ago I ordered just shy of ten thousand dollars worth of motorized wheelchair batteries from Interstate Batteries, and Cactus Jack sent them a check. I should be receiving them in the next week or two. Because of the size of the order I was able to get a much better price and got more batteries for the money. I have had many requests from those in need of a motorized chair, but due to the Coronavirus I had to halt giving out and receiving them for fear of contamination. The people that need these are generally in very poor health and I would not want to take a chance. Also I would be putting my volunteers who pick up the chairs at risk as well. On top of that, the products I use for sanitizing are impossible to get right now.

I have at least 60 motorized chairs on hand now that need new batteries and repairs. As soon as I get delivery of the batteries, I will start the refurbishing process. Having the majority of the batteries in advance will allow me to give these chairs out as needed. Those desperately in need will not have to wait as before. I'm also contemplating giving the chairs away every couple of weeks, instead of the big giveaway in December, as I don't know how this virus will affect large gatherings in the future. I will use the remainder of the donation in radio/newspaper ads to reach out to those in need when the time is right. I will keep everyone posted. I welcome all of you to visit my website azpawngiftofmobility.com to see what I do and the effect it has on people's lives. Be sure to look at all the videos. As the giveaway progresses this year, I will also post on my Facebook pages: az pawn gift of mobility, and my personal site, Philip Pavone, and welcome you to visit them as well.

This will be my 11th year and you have no idea how much you have taken the weight off my shoulders. Not only have you helped many handicapped people live a better life, you have helped their families as well.

Thank you,

Phil Pavone

Presentations:

Twelve members offered their names to make a pitch. Of those, the 3 pitches randomly chosen to present to the membership were:

1. **Neighbors for Neighbors**, presented by Michael and Laurie Blefeld. This organization coordinates with the United Way of SE CT to provide flexible resources to organizations throughout Eastern CT that serve the basic needs of local residents, particularly to high-need populations, including low-income individuals, residents without health insurance, communities of color and individuals with disabilities. The Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut has pledged a 100% match for this fund during this time, which would double the donation from Power of Together.
2. **Bank Square Books**, presented by Susan Kietzman. Bank Square Books and the Savoy Bookshop in Westerly, iconic independent bookstores in our local communities, are experiencing severe financial difficulties and have had to furlough over 30 staff. Kietzman wishes to "straddle the needs of today with the quality of our lives tomorrow," noting that these stores are the "anchor and soul" of our downtowns. The PoT2 donation would contribute to a fundraiser they have started to enable them to remain solvent and re-open, and would go toward payroll, utilities, liabilities and rent.
3. **Eastern CT Community Garden Association**, presented by Mike Herod, was started in 2011 to directly educate and empower community gardeners in eastern CT to create lasting and sustainable solutions for increasing regional food security. They have created hundreds of gardens, along with educational and technical support, for organizations such as the Groton Senior Center. They were the driving force behind the Whitfield Garden in Pawcatuck and the Groton Family Farm, which will donate thousands of pounds of fresh produce to the Gemma Moran Food Bank and other organizations.

Outcome and Payment:

We had a very good response to the survey. Understanding that some members may well be experiencing financial challenges during this time, we noted that opting out of this giving cycle was understandable, though voting was still encouraged. The chosen recipient was **Neighbors for Neighbors**.

For safety and expediency, we have requested that members pay through our online donation mechanism, Givinga. Instructions will be forwarded in the email accompanying these minutes. We are exceptionally grateful to report that Chris Shields, PoT2 member and founder of Givinga, has **agreed to waive the \$3 processing fee for this round of donations only**.

Next Meeting:

Our next regularly scheduled meeting is 7 pm, August 11, 2020 at the Mystic YMCA. We are uncertain at this time about whether we will also change the venue for this meeting and/or move the date, and will keep you apprised.