

Vermont Bar Association
Board of Managers Meeting
Friday, January 17, 2025, at 11 AM
Omni Hotel Montreal and via Zoom

Present: Justin Brown, Jessica Bullock, Lisa Campion, Rich Cassidy, Josh Diamond, Judith Dillon, Pam Eaton, Kate Lamson, Tim Tomasi, Alfonso Villegas and Brianna Weaver.

VBA Staff: Bob Paolini and Kim Velk (in person); Mary Ashcroft and Lisa Maxfield via zoom.

1. Call to Order: President Josh Diamond called the meeting to order at 11:04 AM. He thanked the Young Lawyers' Division for their work on the Thaw which was just beginning.

2. Minutes: Upon motion made by Judith, seconded by Pam, and unanimously approved, the minutes of the December 13, 2024, Board meeting were approved as amended, with Judith and Pam abstaining. The amendment was to remove the last two sentences from the final paragraph about the Board going into executive session.

3. Treasurer's Report: Lisa Maxfield reported that this year's revenue to date is comparable to last year's after backing out the states attorneys who did not renew this year. There are now 290 non-renewals, of which 75 were in the SA group. Staff may circulate another list to the Board for outreach. The Lawyer Referral revenue received a bump of \$25,000 in December with the receipt of a check in a medical malpractice case referral. CLE revenues are up this year due to the notary public training. Over 900 notaries have taken the on-line training. More will do so before the end of January. We have paid an \$8,000 deposit to the Equinox for the mid-year meeting in March. There are 9-10 exhibitors signed up already. Registration will be opening soon for that meeting. Lisa will check on the NEBA numbers. She noted that non-renewals year to year are generally about the same, as attorneys, especially solo practitioners, are retiring. A few of the non-renewing attorneys will renew in the spring in order to take advantage of discounts on CLE programs needed to renew law licensing in June.

4. Emerging Issues: None.

5. Reports:

A. Board Committee Reports:

i. Member Services: The committee did meet and heard from Lisa about non-renewing members.

ii. Operations: Did not meet.

iii. Workforce Development: Did not meet. The committee members continue to work on their survey and on outreach to schools for Law Day.

iv. Access to Justice: Did not meet.

v. Executive Committee: Did not meet.

B. Presidents Report: Josh Diamond noted that he and Bob had met with the Vermont Supreme Court. They discussed the VBA's request to make a survey of lawyer demographics part of the licensing renewal form. Josh is still looking for a syllabus from the ABA which will guide discussions in schools on Law Day. Josh and Bob will meet with the Senate Judiciary next week. The Supreme Court announced that the courts will move away from Webex and toward zoom for remote hearings. The judiciary's 5-year contract with Webex ends soon. Board members discussed the pros and cons of remote hearings.

C. Executive Director's Report: Bob is focusing on the beginning of the Legislative session. He reviews bills as they are introduced and alerts VBA section members about bills of interest in their legal practice areas. So far, bills relating to family, juvenile, criminal, probate and real estate have been introduced. Because there are so many new members of the Legislature, things are off to a slow start.

D. Division & Section Reports:

i. YLD: Pam Eaton welcomed everyone to the Thaw, which was organized by members of the YLD. She especially thanked Justin for his work organizing the event; Josh echoed with his thanks to the YLD.

ii. Women's Division: Brianna Weaver said they had not met but are working on upcoming events—watch for emails.

iii. Government and Non-Profit Section: No report.

E. Staff Reports:

Mary Ashcroft reported that they had received a CATIC Foundation grant of \$3,000 for the Incubator Project. \$8,000 had been requested, but because we have about \$7,000 left from last year's CATIC grant, with this new grant we will have sufficient funds to pay to our current Incubator Lawyers for law office start-up costs. One Incubator attorney had dropped out from the project as he has accepted a position as deputy state's attorney in Orleans County and won't have a private practice. Mary has completed grant reports for the second quarter for our VOCA low bono project, and for the half-year for the small business grant from Vermont Law and Graduate School. We will soon be receiving reimbursements from these grant holders. Other grants reports are due to the Vermont Bar Foundation for IOLTA funded competitive and non-competitive grants. Mary expressed concern that the usual announcements for the VBF competitive grants had not been made, and a letter of intent to apply is usually required to be posted to the Foundation by late January. The VBF website does not contain current information about this grant process. The VBA has begun accepting nominations for our annual Pro Bono Service Award. The award will be given at our mid-year meeting on March 28. The deadline for applications is one week before our Feb. 21 Board meeting. This will give the Access to Justice Committee time to review the nominations and vote on whom to recommend when the committee meets on the morning of February 21.

Kim Velk welcomed all to the Thaw. She thanked the YLD and especially Laura Welcome of the VBA staff for their efforts for this event. Kim is trying to get the Journal to the publisher but still awaits a couple of articles. The Journal will feature a pursuits of happiness article about Attorney Elizabeth Wohl, who is a trained opera singer. Kim and Laura continue their work to organize CLE programs for the mid-year meeting at the Equinox. The Notary Public training is going well and generating good revenues for the VBA.

F. VBF Report: Lisa Campion said that the Foundation Board is working to restructure committees. Several of them meet weekly. An appeal letter will soon be sent out to solicit funds for the Poverty Law Fellow program. The grants committee will be starting their work on the IOLTA grants. Things are progressing, with the help from advice from past VBF board members.

6. Action Items

A. Enrollments: Upon motion made by Justin, seconded by Judith and unanimously approved, the following were enrolled as VBA members: Legal Members: Caroline Badinelli, Michael Bloom, Leah Brenner, Maria Gamache, Tyler Hicks, Kelly Johnson, Ariel Murphy, Edward Perry, Thomas Quinn, Joshua Rice, Jill Schaefer, Timothy Sheble-Hall, Lescha Wilder, Gabriella (Emmett) Wood; Law Student Associate Members: Kathleen Chandley, Michael Murphy, Paul Velk; Licensed in another state: Taylor Hallowell; Law School Graduate: Emma Matters; Interest in the Law: Fabiola Mujomba. There were no abstentions.

B. Appoint VLA-LSV Board Members—Upon motion by Pam Eaton, seconded by Jess Bullock and unanimously approved, attorneys Michelle Anderson and Joseph Ronan were appointed as members of the VLA/LSB Board of Directors. There were no abstentions.

C. Define Process to Fill Interim Board & Officer Seats: Josh explained that the VBA Constitution says the Board has the ability to appoint board members and officers when vacancies occur. The appointment must be ratified by the membership at the next meeting. Josh suggested that to avoid confusion, the Board refrain from filling the board vacancy caused by the appointment of Kate Lamson as temporary Secretary until after the membership meeting in March. The Board agreed.

D. Update Nominating Committee Report: Josh noted that the Nominating Committee had met in December and set up the elections for board positions. Since then, there have been changes, including the resignation of the Secretary and withdrawal of two board candidates. Josh asked the Nominating Committee to reconvene to consider and address these changes. Upon motion made by Alfonso, seconded by Pam and unanimously voted, the Nominating Committee was charged to reconvene to rebalance the races for board positions. Jessica Bullock abstained.

Then ensued discussion of the desirability of head-to-head races for Board positions. This will be added to the agenda for next meeting.

E. Demographic Data on License Applications Request to the Supreme Court: Included in the Board packet was the Massachusetts licensing survey. The VBA has asked the Supreme Court to

consider these questions, but the Court indicated that it did not like the mandatory approach in the model from MA. Josh has asked the Workforce Development Committee to look again at the MA model, outline the information to be requested, and indicate why gathering this information is important. Discussion ensued. Josh asked the committee to refine its letter concerning gender, race and ethnicity, and draft a possible survey to suggest to the Court.

7. New business:

Bob circulated proposed ABA mid-year meeting resolutions and asked that VBA Board members alert him and Josh if they note something of concern.

8. Old Business: None

Executive session: upon motion made, seconded and unanimously approved, the Board went into executive session on a personnel matter at 12:55PM. The Board came out of executive session at 1:06PM.

9. Adjourn: Upon motion duly made, seconded and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 1:06PM.

Respectfully submitted: VBA Staff