

Vermont Bar Association
Board of Managers Meeting
Friday, May 23, 2025 at 1:00PM
VBA Conference Room, Montpelier and via Zoom

Present: Present: Jessica Bullock, Lisa Champion, Josh Diamond, Judith Dillon, Kate Lamson, Ryan Long, Liz Miller, Keith Roberts, Colette Schmidt, Matt Valerio, Alfonso Villegas, Breanna Weaver, Kathy Zhou.

VBA Staff: Bob Paolini, Mary Ashcroft, Lisa Maxfield.

Guest: Austin Howard with Chittenden Co. Public Defenders' office

- 1. Call to Order:** President Josh Diamond called the meeting to order at 1:06 PM.
- 2. Minutes:** Upon motion made by Matt, seconded by Ryan, and unanimously approved, the minutes of the April 2025 Board meeting were accepted as printed. Abstaining from the vote were Liz and Lisa.
- 3. Treasurer's Report:** Lisa Maxfield reported she added a column for year-to-year variance. Membership is down because the state's attorneys did not renew as a group. We won't meet our membership goal for this year. There is a positive variance in CLE income due to the notary public training. The VBA made a contribution to the VBF to honor the memory of Rich Cassidy. CLEs will be plentiful in June and will bring in good revenue, so we will hopefully meet our CLE goal. We are also optimistic that LRS is on target to meet its budget. We will have capital expenses this summer as the driveway sink hole needs repair. The operations committee will be reviewing whether the VBA should charge credit card fees.
- 4. Emerging Issues:** None.

5. Reports: [OBJ]

A. Board Committee Reports:

- i. Member Services: Did not meet.
- ii. Operations: Did not meet.
- iii. Workforce Development: Did not meet.
- iv. Access to Justice: Kate Lamson talked with the Judiciary's Andy Strauss about steps needed to move forward with limited licensing. Andy pointed out issues in the paralegals' proposal that needed to be addressed.
- v. Executive Committee: Did not meet.

B. President's Report: Josh reported that the Rule of Law Rally was well attended by about 750 attendees/ marchers, which he found inspiring. It was good to hear from speakers who were doing the hard work in the field. The Rally organizers thanked the VBA for its financial support. Josh talked with the Supreme Court on the provisional licensing issues. Josh also shared mock trial and Law Day experiences. The Boys & Girls Club kids visited VT Supreme Court, which was really impactful for both kids and the court.

C. Executive Director's Report: Bob Paolini reported that most of his time has been spent in the legislature. Most of the VBA's bills have passed and been signed by the Governor: writ of possession changes, the probate bill, the new UCC law, business operations definitions, and adoptions/standby guardianships. The miscellaneous judiciary bill is still left to go. The legislature is setting up several study committees, and in 2 cases the VBA will be involved: adult involuntary guardianships, and family violence. A resolution honoring Rich Cassidy was passed.

D. Division & Section Reports:

i. YLD: Ryan Long said that they have been busy. The dinner with Judge Tomasi had 6 attendees, and another dinner with a judge is planned for the fall. The YLD is sponsoring 2 teams for the Burlington Marathon. There is also a mixer planned for May 29 at Three Penny Taproom. A crew from the YLD visited Montreal to view and then select a hotel for the Thaw in January.

ii. Women's Division: No report.

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

E. Staff Reports:

Kim Velk was not present but sent in a written report of her activities this past month.

Mary Ashcroft reported that the VBF had approved roll-over funding left from a previous grant year, which would be about \$50,000, to fund county low bono projects for the coming fiscal year. The VBF also approved an increased appropriation of \$25,000 for the Legal Access Coordinator position, which partially covers Mary's position. Mary has also received a new inquiry from an attorney interested in our Incubator Project, and another lawyer with interest has sat in on rounds to see if the project will be a good fit. Bob and Mary will talk with two people who want to start a project to provide legal help for non-profit organizations—similar to what VBA does now with VLGS.

F. VBF Report: Lisa Champion reported that the VBF recently approved grants to fund legal services projects, and they will be sending out a press release. The VBF has increased its social media presence and has a weekly newsletter. The VBF recently hosted a successful Justice Social at Foam Brewers in Burlington and will be having a fundraiser at the Lake

Monsters on Friday, June 6. The VBF is applying for grants to diversify its funding. The VBF Board welcomed Pam Eaton as a new board member.

6. Action Items

A. Enrollments: Upon motion made by Matt moved, seconded by Lisa C, and unanimously approved, the following were enrolled as VBA members: Legal members: Sean Brown, Melinda Caterine, Carolyn Conrad, Nicholas Deleault, Frederick Pierce and Emily Wynes; also approved was law office study associate member Olivia Borrero.

B. Update Committee Memberships: Josh noted that there are some vacancies on committee, and some new member assignments. He wants to hear from board members, then will finalize assignments.

C. In house section counsel of the bar—Mary Bouchard had requested that the VBA set up a VBA section for In-House Counsel. Bob met with Mary and other in-house counsel; he checked her list, and most are already VBA members. Bob filled them in on responsibilities of being a section, including CLE programming. Upon motion made by Keith Roberts, seconded by Liz Miller and unanimously approved, the Board voted to create a section for in-house counsel. There were no abstentions.

7. New business:

A. Retreat Planning: Becky Cassidy wants us to meet at her home on the lake in Burlington. The date will be Friday the 27th of June, and will be an all-day event. The agenda will include the search for a new Executive Director, discussion of limited licensing for paralegals, review of the nomination process for board members, and review of the strategic plan. We might also review awards that the VBA gives out, and also board positions in other organizations that the VBA is to fill. The Executive Committee will meet to winnow down this list. Lisa and Bob will find a caterer to provide food.

B. Provisional Licensing: Matt Valerio met with Justice Reiber's clerk yesterday about provisional licensing. This ties into the discussion of legal deserts, especially in rural areas. There is a proposal for an emergency rule change to allow lawyers who are new to Vermont but licensed in another state to practice pending the character and fitness checking. Teri Corsones and Judge Zonay approve the proposed rule, but court bureaucracy is holding it up. Matt Valerio noted that this provisional licensing was once available, but it has disappeared without explanation. The delay is a widespread problem among the public defenders, legal aid and private law firms, who complain that it dissuades lawyers from moving to Vermont to practice.

C. Presentation of SPEAK : Jess Bullock explained that SPEAK is a non-profit organization which fosters debate and public speaking instruction, especially for underrepresented groups. SPEAK has a 6-12 week program, and they are presently working at Chittenden Correctional Facility. They have also worked with Lund Center, elementary school, and in high schools, and this summer will work with the Young Professional organization in Rutland. Jessica asked the Board to help by volunteering as speakers with the group on

legal issues, helping with grant applications, and fundraising. SPEAK is primarily run by volunteers.

9. Executive Session: None

9. Adjourn: There being no further business to discuss, on motion made, seconded and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 2:20PM.

Respectfully submitted: VBA Staff