

## Vermont Bar Association

Friday, February 20, 2026, 1PM

VBA Conference Room, Montpelier VT and via Zoom

Present: Josh Diamond, Amy Palmer Ellis, Kate Lamson, Jordana Levine, Ryan Long, Liz Miller, Keith Roberts, Tim Tomasi, Matt Valerio, Alfonso Villegas, Breanna Weaver, Kathy Zhou .

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

**1. Call to Order:** President Josh Diamond called the meeting to order at 1:03PM.

**2. Minutes:** Upon motion made by Matt Valerio, seconded by Tim Tomasi, and unanimously agreed to, the minutes of the January 16, 2026, VBA Board meeting were approved as printed. There were no opposing votes and no abstentions.

**3. Treasurer's Report:** Lisa Maxfield reminded the Board that the variance between this year's and last year's CLE revenue is due to lack of notary training this year. The Lawyer Referral Service is performing well, and earned an additional \$23,000 as of this meeting date. We have received VBF grant income for VOCA reimbursement and from the VBF for the Legal Access Coordinator position. Expenses are all on track; we will see travel expenses next month for Kim, Jordana and Kate's trip to the ABA Leadership Institute.

#### **4. Emerging Issue:**

Josh has received 2-3 emails from members asking the Board to take a position on the Minnesota events resulting from the ICE activity there. Kim prepared a draft statement, which Josh distributed to the Board. The Executive Committee has reviewed this. Does the Board want to adopt this?

Matt Valerio reminded the Board that when we did this in Bennington in March, we took it to the membership, but only after the Board had acted on it. Discussion ensued. Liz Miller proposed some amendments which the Board reviewed. On motion made by Liz Miller, seconded by Ryan Long, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the revised statement. Judge Tim Tomasi abstained. A copy of the revised statement as released is attached.

#### **5. Reports:**

##### A. Board Committee Reports:

i. Member Services: Did not meet.

ii. Operations: Did not meet.

iii. Workforce Development: Alfonso said the committee met and that Mary reported on the Incubator Program. Alfonso urged lawyers to reach out to local schools to

organize programs for Law Day. The ABA's theme is the Rule of Law and the American Dream. Alfonso will send a link of this program to bar managers.

iv. A2J Committee: Kate reported that the committee had met this morning and reviewed nominations for the VBA's Pro Bono Service Award. The committee recommended giving the award to two volunteers for VAAP assisting in immigration matters: Glennis Gold and Lila Shapero. Two other nominations had been made, but there was limited information about these candidates. Upon motion made by Kate Lamson, seconded by Amy Palmer Ellis, the VBA Board unanimously voted to award the Pro Bono Award to Attorneys Gold and Shapero.

v. Executive Committee: Did not meet.

B. President's Report: Josh Diamond reported on the activities of the Access to Justice Coalition and the legal deserts subcommittee on the VBA which he chairs. Mary Ashcroft is assisting with these as well. At our Mid-Year meeting, we will present a panel on the question of whether there is absolute immunity. The Panel will include Professor Smola, and representatives from the Vermont Attorney General's Office and from the ACLU. The Elder Law Section is working with Don Hayes at VLGS to move forward on Justice Reiber's idea of pop-up estate planning clinics for elders at nursing homes. Hopefully this will be in place by the third quarter of this year. Jordana is headed to DC to promote A2J issues with our Congressional delegation for ABA Day. There was discussion of President's Awards to be given at the Mid-Year meeting.

C. Executive Director's Report: Kim Velk expressed her thanks to the Board for appointing her as VBA Executive Director. She started 19 days ago. She is still doing the education and communications tasks as well as shadowing Bob Paolini at the legislature. She is also dealing with family matters. Kim reported that the Governor will host the MLK awards ceremony on March 19 at the State House. The winning students will also tour the Supreme Court. Kim is working on next edition of the VBA Journal. The Mid-Year meeting registration is open—34 attendees have signed up already, and there are 14 sponsors. Kate and Alfonso are doing a program. The next Board meeting is Thursday, March 26 at the Hilton in Burlington at 3:00PM. The next day, Friday the 27<sup>th</sup>, are the CLE programs and the business luncheon.

D. Legislative Report: Bob Paolini said he is following a couple of things started by VBA. On the House side, legislation to address a family law issue raised by Blake v. Petrie will be part of the miscellaneous bill. There is also a fix to the Kershon decision which is a real estate law matter. Crossover is March 13. The Legislature will take off the week of Town Meeting. On the Senate side, the uniform disclaimer of property interest bill was considered, ad Mark Langan offered testimony, and will do so again. H772 is one of 4 landlord/tenant bills that was moving, but it may have stalled as it needs substantial work.

Bob is also following the Judiciary's budget request—they are looking for more money for more staff, and so the ask is presently \$600,000 over the Governor's recommendation. One issue is the rate that the Judiciary pays for sheriffs to provide security for courthouses.

The VBA is also supporting Vermont Legal Aid's increased budget request. Kim and Bob have followed the judiciary retention process; it is likely that all 6 judicial officers will be retained. Kim met with the Supreme Court just before this Board meeting. Rutland County is getting special funding to catch up on their docket. The conversion from Webex to Zoom for remote hearings is just about complete.

D. Division & Section Reports:

i. YLD: Kathy Zhou reported that the YLD had looked at the survey results from the Thaw. Most respondents liked new hotel. YLD will hold elections in March, and they will work with Laura to send out an email encouraging lawyers to run for the YLD board.

ii. Women's Division: No report

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

Note: Josh had to leave the meeting to catch his flight; Jordana took the chair at 2:02PM.

E. Staff Reports:

Mary Ashcroft reported that The Incubator Project just admitted 2 attorneys for an 18 months session: Aili Obandja of Chittenden County, and Aaron Franklin of Windsor County. We are also allowing an attorney licensed in another state to audit rounds pending the results of her bar admission in Vermont. We are now at 8 incubator attorneys, with an additional 2 attorneys auditing.

Mary continues to assist the Legal Deserts subcommittee for the VBA that Josh is chairing, and is clerk of the Access to Justice Coalition also chaired by Josh. Mary has completed quarterly and ½ year grant reports for our low bono projects. We will be applying for VBF grants to fund our county low bono project and the coordinator position. There are many more applicants this year for this IOLTA money, so competition will be high. Professor Nicole Killoran has obtained a federal Congressional earmark in the bill signed by the President; this will fund our joint small business low bono project for another 3 years.

F. VBF Report: No report.

**6. Action Items**

A. Enrollments: Upon motion made, seconded and unanimously approved, the following were enrolled as VBA members: Susan Clark, Geoffrey Gallagher, Chase Johnson, Kate Lynch, Ronda Parish, Tyler Purinton and Frank Stewart; Interest in the Law: Peter Zuk; Licensed in another State: Johnathan Bailey, Patrick Burke; Law Student Associate Members: Jasmine Belton, Taylor Hella, Mark Kaufman; Government-States Attorneys: Richard Nolan.

There was another applicant, Dhanabjay Adrawal, whose application was rejected as incomplete; if a completed application is filed, this will be voted on at the next Board meeting.

B. Pro Bono Awards: See above action under A2J Committee report.

C. Retreat Planning; The date is set for June 18 and will be at Becky Cassidy's home in Burlington. Jordana will be putting together the retreat activities.

D. Change in July Board Meeting Date: July 17 won't work, as several Board members will be in Montana at the ALPS bar leadership training. The date of July 24 was suggested instead. The Board agreed to change the date of the Board meeting to July 24<sup>th</sup>.

E. Change signers on VBA bank accounts: Lisa explained that our banking and brokerage resolutions need to be changed so that Kim Velk will replace Bob Paolini as signer on all accounts. Matt Valerio, as VBA Treasurer is already on as signer and will remain

Upon motion made by Matt Valerio, seconded by Tim Tomasi, and unanimously approved, the Vermont Bar Association Board of Bar Managers voted to remove Robert M. Paolini, outgoing Executive Director, and replace him with Kim Velk, incoming Executive Director, as authorized signer on the Vanguard broker account and on all VBA bank accounts. Matthew Valerio will also remain on these accounts as authorized signer.

F. Board resolution on ICE activity in Minnesota: See action taken under Emerging Issue above.

**7. New business:** Kim reported receiving an email from Pam Marsh concerning an AI issue. Pam asks if the VBA has any position on rules of evidence concerning AI. No action necessary today; several committees are already looking into it.

**8. Old Business:** None.

**9. Executive Session:** None

**9. Adjourn:** There being no further business to conduct, on motion made by Kate Lamson, seconded by Matt Valerio and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 2:31PM.

Respectfully submitted: VBA Staff