

Vermont Bar Association

Thursday, March 26, 2026, 3PM

Hilton Lake Champlain Conference Room, Burlington, VT and via Zoom

Present: Jessica Bullock, Lisa Campion, Josh Diamond, Kate Lamson, Jordana Levine, Ryan Long, Keith Roberts, Collette Schmidt, Tim Tomasi, Matt Valerio, Alfonso Villegas, Kathy Zhou,
Guests: Leslie Black, Mike Kennedy

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

1. Call to Order: President Josh Diamond called the meeting to order at 3 09PM.

2. Minutes: Upon motion made by Lisa Campion, seconded by Matt Valerio, and unanimously agreed to, the minutes of the February 20, 2026 VBA Board meeting were approved with the addition of Jordana Levine as being present. There were no abstentions.

3. Treasurer's Report: Lisa Maxfield noted that Lawyer Referral income is doing well. There are recent travel expenses for Kim, Jordana and Kate for attending the ABA Bar Leadership Institute in Chicago and ABA Day in DC. We have purchased a new laptop for the office. The printer we have used for the VBA Journal has closed; we are looking for other printers, preferably within Vermont. We did locate an out-of-state printer and will use them for the next edition of the Journal, at a cost of \$1,000 less than we are presently paying. The VBA will be transition its VBA Connect platform to "Thrive" Community, which will have more of a social media interface. We negotiated to waive the \$5,000 implementation fee. The change will occur in a month or so. We have about 220 attendees and 18 exhibitors and sponsors for tomorrow's Mid-Year meeting.

4. Emerging Issue:

Ryan Long reported that the federal courts have seen an influx of activity, specifically habeas petitions. These require a degree of specialization and training which VAAP can provide. The court is urging that we educate the

public, individual filers and lawyers on how to do these petitions. Kim will ask the Immigration Bar Section to assist with this.

Kate Lamson noted that Legal Aid, which assists with the mental health docket, used to receive funding to train their attorneys. Future funding is questionable; a large law firm may be asked to take this over. This matter will be tabled for now and raised again in the future.

5. Reports:

A. Board Committee Reports:

i. Member Services: Lisa and Kim said that the committee had met to discuss the Mid-Year Meeting.

ii. Operations: Did not meet.

iii. Workforce Development: Did not meet.

iv. A2J Committee: Kate said that the committee had met to review next steps in the proposal for paralegal licensing. They will review the proposed ethical rules to cover the program. Josh asked the committee to weigh in on a request from the VT Access to Justice Coalition to identify the 3 top matters which the Coalition should work on. Kate agrees.

v. Executive Committee: Did not meet.

B. President's Report: Josh Diamond reported that he now chairs the VT Access to Justice Coalition. The VBA's LRAP committee met to make final awards; they will appropriate close to the full \$60,000 to eligible lawyers. There is clearly a need, and this money makes a difference to help lawyers with their law school debt. Justice Reiber has asked Josh and the VBA to assist with the idea of having lawyers reaffirm their oaths in ceremonies on May 1, county by county.

C. Executive Director's Report: Kim Velk said that she, Jordana and Kate travelled to Chicago to attend the ABA leadership meeting. Kim thanked Bob and Lisa for their help in transitioning executive directors. Kim is still working on the Journal, as well as spring CLE programs. She is learning the statehouse. This is a very busy time.

D. Legislative Report: Bob Paolini said that he was successful in derailing a couple of no-good bills, including one related to approved real estate transfer which no one liked, and another which would have allowed the successful bidder at judicial sale to have access to the property. The miscellaneous judiciary bill will contain a fix to a family law decision which made judgments subject to an 8-year renewal requirement. Another fix in the works would clarify recent confusion between joint tenants and tenants in common in deeds.

The uniform disclaimer of property interest bill is moving again thanks to Mark Langdon who testified a second time before the committee; the committee then approved the bill which was sent to the floor and passed. The non-compete bill is essentially dead as it didn't make crossover.

The House is debating the budget on the floor today. Some judiciary requests may not be in budget. Sheriffs are requesting an increase of up to \$65 per hour for their work in court. The judiciary got 26 positions changed from limited service to full-time permanent positions. The state's attorneys appear to have gotten relief from vacancy savings. The public defenders got training money back and got an increase for investigators. Vermont Legal Aid received \$200,000 for immigration and \$100,000 for its help line, but lost funding for the Medicare advocacy program.

Judicial retention has seen more activity than expected. Bob's role when he worked for the Vermont Trial Judges Association was to ready judges for their retention hearings. Now he follows the process, but doesn't lobby for or against their retention. 11 Judges were confirmed.

Bob said the Legislature is looking at the way judges' terms are calculated. Presently, a new judge often fills a term; the change would be to start the 6-year term when the judge is first appointed. This change could require a state constitutional amendment.

E. Division & Section Reports:

i. YLD: Ryan Long said that YLD will hold elections tomorrow for board members. The Mid-Winter Thaw was very successful. YLD is working on CLEs in other parts of the state, and hosting other dinners with judges. Windsor and Orange Counties are working toward reviving their county bars.

ii. Women's Division: Kim said that the Division is getting more active, and will have elections soon. The Executive Director of the National Women's Division lives in Morrisville—Kim will reach out to her.

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

F. Staff Reports:

Mary Ashcroft reported that she has filed two grant applications with the VBF—one for \$75,000 for the county low bono project, and one for \$40,000 to cover a portion of the LA Coordinator's salary and benefits. Competition is high for these grants. Mary also filed a request with the VBF to transfer BOA Settlement grants not being used to cover

the funding gap in the small business low bono project, pending receipt of federal funding which has been awarded. Also, Mary will update last year's application to the ABA for the Gambrell Professionalism Award of \$3500. We didn't get the award last year, but we were reminded that the ABA will consider us again. Josh noted that Mary is also serving as a resource on a number of other committees.

G. VBF Report: Lisa Campion said that the Foundation had an event at the Queen City Brewery on the state of housing in Vermont; the event was sold out. Kim is working with Hannah on the upcoming Justice Social in Burlington. The Foundation is also planning another Burlington-based event at the Burlington Beer Company on November 5. The IOLTA grants and revenue committees have been very busy. The Foundation is looking for 3 board members: one each in the Bennington and Brattleboro areas, and one for an at-large board seat. The Foundation is also working with Judiciary on how banks sign up to be approved IOLTA providers.

6. Action Items

A. Enrollments: Upon motion made by Matt Valerio, seconded by Alfonso Villegas and unanimously approved, the following were enrolled as VBA members: Legal Members: Emily Beer, William Cannon, Sarah Catapano-Friedman, Daniel Clarke, David Dickinson, Daniel Dube, Anthony Falcone, Daniel Fetter, Catherine Holcroft, Tess Liegeois, Lisa Milot, Joaquin Padilla, Natassia Peterson, Karen Schmidt, Leslie Smith, Darlene Toolin, and William Wahrer; Law Student Associate Members: Tyler-Joseph Ballard and John Stockham; Law Office Study Associate Members Brittney Aube and Erica

Hirschhorn; Law School Graduate Members Randy Liebowitz and Catalina Londono; Paralegal Stephen McDonald; Interest in the Law Member Isaiah Rashad; Legal Administrator Member Colleen Mills.

B. 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. She got some good ideas from the ABA meeting in Chicago.

C. Request for support for ASL interpreter training: Kim said that this group seeks a letter of support from the VBA so that they can approach funders for grants. Upon motion made by Kate, seconded by Matt and unanimously approved, it was agreed to send a general letter of support for interpretive services as an access to justice matter.

D. Amicus Brief/Board support for attorney seeking reinstatement after voluntary relinquishment of license: Attorney Leslie Black explained that her client had relinquished his license to deal with substance abuse issues. Now in recovery, that attorney is having a hard time getting his license back. He wants to withdraw his relinquishment, but the PBR says they are without authority to allow that under the rules. Leslie has appealed to the Supreme Court. The Court promotes attorney wellness, and has the authority to reinstate an attorney. Ironically, if a complaint had been made against this attorney, then he would have been referred for help, been allowed to tap resources, and then resume his license. Leslie asked the VBA Board to weigh in with an amicus brief. Andy Strauss has said that the lawyer may have to retake bar exam. Discussion ensued. The matter should be looked at by one of the subcommittees in the legal deserts study. Matt said there should be a process to reinstate an attorney. Leslie said the briefs are due in Mid-May, and that any VBA amicus filing would come after the parties' briefs are filed.

Josh senses that the Board needs more information. He tabled the matter until the next Board meeting on April 17, before which time Attorney Leslie Black will get more information to the Board. Specifically, Leslie is requesting that the VBA file an amicus brief support the authority of the court to exercise its discretion and readmit an attorney, using this as a good example of court support its own wellness initiative.

E. DOJ Proposal for separate attorney discipline procedure for US Attorneys: Amy Palmer Ellis brought this matter to Josh's attention. Kim was also getting emails on this. The proposal is that when an ethical complaint is

filed against the DOJ or US attorney, it would be sent to DOJ for action before it goes to the lawyer's state licensing authority.

The deadline is April 6 for the VBA Board to weigh in if it wishes to do so. The Vermont Constitution gives the Vermont Supreme Court the authority to license attorneys. What the DOJ is proposing goes to the heart of separation of powers, and our state court's authority over its lawyers. Mike Kennedy explained that the National Organization of Bar Counsel opposes this proposal.

Upon motion made by Alfonso, seconded by Ryan and unanimously approved, the VBA Board voted to submit a comment against the proposed DOJ rule. Alfonso will prepare a draft comment, and Jordana will circulate it and poll the Board on the draft.

7. New business: This being Josh Diamond's last meeting as VBA Board President, he was presented with a chair. Kim thanked Josh for being head of the Board during this last year and a half. Josh said it was the highlight of his professional career to be VBA President, and thanked all Board and staff.

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 5:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted: VBA Staff