

Vermont Bar Association
Board of Managers Meeting
Friday, November 22, 2024 at 1PM
VBA Conference Room and via Zoom

Present: Justin Brown, Jessica Bullock, Lisa Champion, Rich Cassidy, Josh Diamond, Judith Dillon, Pam Eaton, Kate Lamson, Tim Tomasi, Ted Tyler, Matt Valerio, Breanna Weaver.

VBA Staff: Mary Ashcroft, Lisa Maxfield, Bob Paolini, 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 Kate Lamson and unanimously approved, the minutes of the October Board meeting were approved as printed.

3. Treasurer's Report: Lisa Maxfield reported that membership renewal is going pretty well with \$358,000 collected. Board has a list of just under 300 members who have not renewed. Lisa asked Board members to reach out to those they know and remind them to renew. Income to date of over \$85,000 includes registrations for notary public training. Expenses are tracking as projected.

4. Emerging Issues:

Judith Dillon noted that the Vermont Labor Relations Board will soon have 2 openings as one member is retiring and another is stepping down. She encouraged the Board to reach out to those who may be interested and urge them to apply.

Breanna Weaver noted that at bench/bar meetings lately lawyers have raised problems with Odyssey. In particular, lawyers advise that they have filed stipulations to settle a case, but those stipulations just sit there. Breanna is wondering if there is some way to flag items in the queue which are in need of immediate attention. Discussion ensued.

5. Reports:

A. Board Committee Reports

i. Member Services: Did not meet.

ii. Operations: Did not meet.

iii. Workforce Development: Judith Dillon said that the committee had met and had discussed Law Day 2025 and recruiting at the social studies teachers' conference next month.

iv. Access to Justice: Kate Lamson circulated a brief report, which is attached. The committee is beginning to reorganize and begin work on next year's activities.

v. Executive Committee: Did not meet.

B. Presidents Report: Josh Diamond reported on the following:

--He met with the Supreme Court and discussed 2 issues re: access to court records. First, on Odyssey, lawyers and the press will be able to access more records via elevated access. Second, on the VBA's request for more demographic data gathering via attorney relicensing, the Court wants to know what other NE states are doing. The Court also wants a formal request from the VBA to gather this data as part of lawyer licensing. Upon motion made by Judith Dillon, seconded by Justin Brown and unanimously approved, the Board formally requested that the Vermont Supreme Court gather demographic data from lawyers during the attorney relicensing process.

--Josh set next board meeting for December 13, 2024 at 1PM, following a noon meeting with the Supreme Court.

--Josh will attend the December 6th Social Studies Teachers' conference at Lake Morey. He will promote Law Day and visits by attorneys to local schools. The ABA discussion topic for these visits is the US Constitution as a unifying force for Americans.

C. Executive Director's Report: Bob Paolini reported on the following:

--Along with Jessica Bullock and Alfonso Villegas, Bob and Judith sat in on the CLEAR listening conference, which was set up by the conference of chief justices. CLEAR stands for Commission on Legal Education and Admissions Reform. The group is working on a report on bar admissions and related topics including practice readiness, bar admissions, and promoting public interest practice.

--The NEBA conference at the Von Trapp lodge in Stowe was a great success. Some VBA Board and staff attended and won the trivia contest. Conference attendees from around New England loved the venue and heard from a grandson of Captain Von Trapp and Maria. Judith thanked the staff.

--Bob is starting on work for the upcoming legislative session. Another probate section/property law section bill request will be made, and a family law arbitration bill will be introduced. He has sent the latter to the family law section chair for posting on VBA Connect. There is also a landlord/tenant legislative study committee which Bob is attending remotely. A bill will be introduced to create a forgivable loan program for VLGS grads who then work for state government.

--Tim Tomasi also mentioned he had requested that the VBA print and hand out copies of the Vermont Constitution. Lisa is working on this.

D. Division & Section Reports:

i. YLD: Justin reported that the group is working on Thaw planning. A flyer will be out soon. He thanked the VBA staff for its work on the Thaw. The link to reserve a room at the Omni is now open. His report is attached.

ii. Women's Division: Breanna reported that they are working on a social event; details to follow at the next meeting.

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

E. Staff Reports:

--Kim Velk said the three sessions of the notary public training were conducted, and the last session has been recorded for future reference. Lawyers can obtain CLE credit for attending. More than 2000 people attended the trainings. The VBA also hosted a free CLE to explain the transition to the new Fast Case platform. The Bankruptcy section's CLE is today at VLGS. She is working on the MLK essay and poster contest for students in middle school.

--Mary reported that we have 3 new incubator attorneys: Asfar Basha of South Burlington, who wants to concentrate on estate planning services for the Muslim community; Craig Howie of Montpelier, former journalist and editor with Politico and the LA Times, who hopes to do family law and a general practice; and Samuel Swope of Guildhall, part time probate judge for Essex County, who is interested in doing criminal defense. They are joining Nader Hashim of Dummerston, Jason Coupal of Fair Haven, and Austin Andersen of South Royalton. Some interest has been expressed by at least one other possible candidate.

Mary has filed our annual report and grant renewal request with CATIC Foundation, which provides \$8,000 a year for stipends of \$2,000 for each incubator lawyer for start-up law office costs. Some stats from her report: of the 20 attorneys who have graduated from the incubator project, 16 are still licensed in VT and most remain in active practice.

F. VBF Report:

Judith Dillon noted that Bonnie Badgewick now chairs the VBF and that Hannah King is the new Executive Director. The VBF will be reorganizing its committees. The IOLTA Committee is being careful in its outreach to participating banks and credit unions with requests to increase rates on IOLTA accounts. Bonnie and Hannah want to have monthly phone calls with Bob and Josh so that the 2 organizations will be better connected.

6. **Action Items**

A. Enrollments: Upon motion made by Matt Valerio, seconded by Judith Dillon and unanimously favorably voted, the following enrollments were approved: Legal members: Christian Bohorquez, Brittany Cates, Andrew Cliburn, and Austin Howard; Law Student Association members: Jacob Bedford and Katrina Menard; Licensed in another state: Roderick Williams.

B. Fill VBF Seat: As Rich Cassidy and Judith Dillon are both remaining on the VBF Board, there are no vacancies, so no action is needed.

C. Set Board Meeting Dates: The June date is set as June 27th, with a brief meeting at the retreat. Josh is still working with the Supreme Court to set up the bi-monthly meeting with them.

D. Nominate 3 Judicial Conduct Board Members: Tim Tomasi and Judith Dillon both recused themselves from this discussion. Statements of interest for these positions were received from Sarah George, Alexander Dean, Madison Boemig, Judith Dillon and Melanie Kehne. Discussion ensued. Upon motion made by Matt Valerio, seconded by Lisa Campion and unanimously

approved, the Board voted to nominate Dean, Dillon, and Kehne as the VBA's nominees. Abstaining from the vote and discussion were Tim Tomasi and Judith Dillon.

E. Fill Open Board Seat: Because Rich Cassidy is President Elect and he is serving on the Board in that capacity, Rich's Board seat is now open. The Board can fill this vacancy through the end of the term, or 9-30-25. Jim Rodgers and Keith Roberts both expressed interest, although Jim indicated that he would decline if someone else was interested. Upon motion made by Matt Valerio, seconded by Judith Dillon, and unanimously approved, Keith Roberts was appointed to fill the vacancy on the VBA Board.

F. Appoint Member to Court User Group: Alexander Dean was the only person who expressed interest in this position. Upon motion by Judith Dillon, seconded by Lisa Campion and unanimously agreed to, Alex Dean was appointed to the Court User Group.

G. Appoint Nominating Committee Members: The Nominating Committee will meet on 12-13-24 to nominate officers and candidates for VBA Board seats. In the past, county bar presidents and division chairs have been invited to also serve on this committee, which must have at least 10 people. Judith and 7 board members and division chairs are willing to serve; two more members are needed. It was agreed that the executive committee of the Board will also serve.

7. New business

Membership Directory Discussion: Lisa Maxfield prepared and circulated a memo documenting that the VBA is losing money on the print edition of the director. She also noted that the printed edition is out of date as soon as it is printed. It is also a time drain on staff. Lisa recommends NOT printing a directory, just encouraging members to use the on-line directory. She also said that most other states have stopped printing paper directories. Much discussion ensued. Breanna displayed how individual members could prepare the directory for printing on their office printers if they want printed version.

Tim Tomasi moved that the VBA not publish a directory in 2025, and to revisit the issue at the Board retreat in June to see if there is a groundswell of protest. Judith Dillon seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

8. Old Business: None

9. Adjourn: Upon motion made by Judith Dillon, seconded by Jessica Bullock and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 3:18PM.

Respectfully submitted: VBA Staff