

Vermont Bar Association
Board of Managers Meeting
Thursday, December 4, Friday
VBA Conference Room, Montpelier, and via Zoom

Present: Justin Brown, Jessica Bullock, Lisa Campion, Josh Diamond, Kate Lamson, Liz Miller, Keith Roberts, Collette Schmidt, Tim Tomasi, Matt Valerio and Alfonso Villegas.

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

- 1. Call to Order:** President Josh Diamond called the meeting to order at 1:16PM.
- 2. Minutes:** Upon motion made by Matt, duly seconded and unanimously approved, the minutes of the October 24, 2025 VBA Board meeting were accepted as printed. No one abstained.
- 3. Treasurer's Report:** Lisa Maxfield reported that the VBA's dues campaign ended Nov. 15. Staff emailed reminders yesterday to 300 non-renewing members and received quite a few responses. So far, about \$378,000 in dues has been received. There remain 221 non-renewing lawyers so far. The Lawyer Referral Services received a check for \$18,000 very recently. Lisa again reminded the Board that the variance in the CLE line reflects the fact that we won't have notary training income this fiscal year as we did last fiscal year. We are awaiting a check from the VBF for one of our grants.

4. Emerging Issue:

None. OB

5. Reports: OB

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: Did not meet. Lisa Maxfield has compiled the results from the survey about the expanded use of paralegals in Family Court. Roughly 46% of those responding to the questionnaire supported the expanded role, while 33% did not. There are strong feelings on both sides. There will be further discussion of this at the next Board meeting.
- v. Executive Committee: Did not meet.

B. President's Report: Josh Diamond reported that the Board met with the Vermont Supreme Court today. Chief Justice Reiber expressed his appreciation for this direct

communication from the bar and the work that we do. The Judiciary now has self-help centers in all of the county courthouses; they can assist pro se litigants with forms, etc. The Judiciary's proposed budget looks OK. The Judiciary has established committees to work on the study of Vermont's legal deserts. Josh is chairing the subcommittee that will review what the VBA has for programs for the bar. Josh noted that Kevin Lumpkin will serve on the Vermont Ethics Commission as the VBA's representative. Josh said that the ED search committee will report later in the Executive Session. Josh also noted that LRAP applications are being received; the committee agreed that attorneys making \$90,000 or less are eligible to apply for loan repayment assistance.

The nominating committee met earlier today to nominate candidates for VBA officers and board members. For the Board, the committee is nominating Lisa Campion, Keith Roberts, and Alex Cy to each serve a term on the Board. There are no contested elections, but that can change if there are nominations from the floor. The committee also nominated Kate Lamson as President Elect, Matt Valerio as Treasurer, and Alfonso Villegas as Secretary. Also, Elizabeth Kruska was nominated as Association Delegate to the ABA House of Delegates.

C. Executive Director's Report: Bob Paolini reported that he briefly went through the survey's responses re: expanding the role of paralegals in Family court cases. Those responding to the survey so far generally support the idea of paralegals filling out forms but disagree with the idea of paralegals appearing in court. Bob will send detailed results of the survey to the Board in advance of the next meeting.

Bob Paolini also remarked that the latest judiciary rule changes, effective January 1, 2026, will extend attorney-client privilege to those prospective clients in touch with lawyer referral and information services. This rule change was 10 years in the making. Jeffrey Messina, chair of the committee on arbitration of fee complaints, is looking for attorneys willing to serve as panelists to decide on cases.

Bob said he is getting ready for the Legislature to return in January. The focus will be on the budget, on education funding and health care costs, so this not the best year to ask for access to justice money. Bob will work the legislative session for the VBA for this second year of the biennium.

There was one new claim for the Client Security Fund, this one from an inmate, Randall Swartz, serving time for murder; the claim is for a federal case. The claimant's attorney was accused of misappropriating funds, failing to pay property taxes on the client's property and theft of client's tools, etc. Bob followed up with disciplinary counsel, who had investigated the claim and dismissed it. The matter was also brought before Judge Crawford who dismissed it as well. This all happened more than 2 years ago. Under the rules of the CSF, any claim must be filed within 2 years of occurrence or it will be disallowed. The claimant must also file proof that he had made a claim against the attorney's professional liability insurance carrier, which did not occur. The disposition of this claim is under Action Items below.

D. Division & Section Reports:

i. YLD: Ryan Long reported that the YLD continues preparing for the Mid-Winter Thaw in January at the Westin in Montreal. The presenters for CLE panels have been confirmed, and “save the date” notices for January 16-17 have been sent out. Registration will open soon. Kim asked for information to be sent to her on the Thaw so the VBA can publicize.

ii. Women’s Division: No report.

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

E. Staff Reports:

Kim Velk reported that Ryan Long and the Bankruptcy bar is presenting a full day CLE program in South Burlington. Kim is working on the winter issue of the VBA Journal. VBA staff are providing administrative support for the YLD’s Thaw. Kim is working on an advanced CLE course on AI, presented by Jared Corea and colleagues. The cost will be \$3,000 to \$4,000 per attendee. The Martin Luther King essay and poster contest is underway; Caitlin and Kim met with social studies teachers last week. They are looking for attorneys willing to volunteer in schools on May 1 for Law Day.

Mary Ashcroft reported that Attorney Sara Puls, a criminal defense attorney, has joined the Incubator Project. We now have 8 lawyers in the Incubator Project. Two are graduating at the end of this year; 3 in 2026, and 3 in 2027. We will put out a call for applications for new Incubator candidates in the Journal and Pulse.

Mary also reported on recent inquiries from 2 lawyers who were considering leaving their present employment and going into solo practice. She advises them on what the Incubator Project can offer them and how to apply. Mary has submitted to the CATIC Foundation our annual report on use of last year’s grant which has funded stipends for our incubator lawyers. She also requested a new \$8000 grant for the coming year.

Federal funding for our small business low bono project with VLGS is running out in 2026. Prof. Nicole Killoran is seeking new funding sources but has been unsuccessful so far. Mary asked Board members to be on the lookout for possible funding sources.

Mary also reported that she receives frequent requests for help from groups who want to start pro or low bono projects. Most recently those included the VBA’s own section on in-house counsel (they want to start a pro bono project), the Non-Profit Legal Hub, and The Clemons Family Farm Foundation to support African Diaspora Artists. Most organizations are looking for pro bono help and access to our attorneys but are not offering money.

Upcoming activities for Mary and the VBA’s Access to Justice Committee will include awarding the VBA’s Pro Bono Service Award, to be presented at the Mid-Year meeting. Nominations will be accepted beginning in January 2026. The Committee will also assist with planning the VBA’s Celebrate Pro Bono Conference in October of 2026 at the State House. This is an all-day free event to recruit and train lawyers interested in pro bono and low bono opportunities.

F. VBF Report: Lisa Campion reported that the Vermont Bar Foundation had just released an impact report and request for donations in advance of Giving Tuesday and for the annual VBF fund drive. The Foundation is also working on its One Hour for Justice Campaign. The IOLTA and grants committees are up and working. The VBF-hosted Justice Gala raised over \$30,000. They are hiring an intern as well as recruiting 2 new board members to represent southern Vermont.

6. Action Items

A. Enrollments: Upon motion made by Matt Valerio, seconded by Keith Roberts and unanimously approved, with no abstentions, the following were enrolled as VBA members: Legal Members: Michelle Angelitis, Bridget Brett, Ke'ala Brosseau, Megan Cannella, Courtney D'Amato, Mackenzie Harrison, Eva Massimino, Anna Ploof, and Alexander Taylor; Law Office Study Associate Member Yvette Austin; Law Student Associate Members Jackson Barzun, Caroline Keyser, Avery Schwenk and Jordan Young; Licensed in Another State Member Sean Davis.

B. Adopt CSF Annual Report: Bob reported that the balance in the Client Security Fund as of 8-31-25 is \$2,200,464.87. On the claim of Randall Swartz, as reported above, Matt Valerio moved that the claim be denied. The motion was seconded by Jordana Levine, and the Board unanimously voted in favor of the motion to deny Swarts' claim. There were no abstentions.

7. New business: None

8. Old Business: None.

9. Executive Session: The Board went into an executive session to discuss the Executive Director Search and annual staff bonuses. The Board came out of Executive Session and took no further actions.

9. Adjourn: On motion made, seconded and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted: VBA Staff