

Minutes
Business Law Section Pro Bono Committee
Boca Raton Resort & Club, Boca Raton, Florida
Grand Ballroom, Salon A
June 22, 2017 – 1:30-3:30 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at 1:40 p.m.

I. Introductions

- A. Attending: John Macdonald, Chair
Hon. Laurel M. Isicoff, Judicial Chair
Jeff Hirsch
Maxine Long
Mindy Mora
William Van Nortwick
Jay D. Mussman (by conference call)

II. Mission Statement: *To Achieve 100% participation in pro bono services by Business Law Section Members and the other attorneys in their firms.*

III. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the meeting of January 25, 2017, were approved.

IV. Initial Comments: The Committee devoted its initial discussions to the collective frustration over the scheduling and room assignments for the Pro Bono Committee meetings, which have consistently conflicted with other meetings to which our Committee members have been committed to attend. In this instance the majority of those present were obligated to participate in or attend a judicial forum, in a location at the other end of the Resort property. Accordingly, the meeting was abbreviated and the agenda was covered only cursorily.

V. Ongoing Projects:

- A. **Florida Pro Bono Matters:** John Macdonald provided a brief report from Ericka Garcia of the Florida Bar Foundation on the current status of roll-out of the new project Florida Pro Bono Matters. The project, for which seed money was funded in part by a contribution from the Business Law Section at the request of the Pro Bono Committee, has had a successful opening in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, is shortly to be rolled out in Orlando, and will be followed by roll-outs in Palm Beach/Broward/St. Lucie/Martin Counties (29 June), Hillsborough and the Tampa Bay area (August 24), and Jacksonville and Tallahassee (September 12).

The platform is designed to permit access by links directly from law firms' internal desktop programs, and the Pro Bono Committee can be instrumental in advertising the link opportunity to the Section's constituent members' firms which have internal networks. The platform's database can be filtered to present for review both litigation and non-litigation

matters, so business attorneys who are averse to litigation service can efficiently find transactional or other non-litigation matters. Ericka Garcia reports that the platform management will be responsive to suggestions for alternative features as we all gain experience with its potential. The platform is a unique prototype, and is precedential with no known counterpart across the nation.

B. **Non-Profit Clinics:** The Committee briefly discussed that the Non-Profit Clinic program needs to be inventoried as to what communities across the state are doing with respect to the clinics, whether they are still being conducted under the auspices of the BLS or whether they have been passed to other legal aid or supporting organizations.

C. **Website Content:** The Committee will coordinate with Tracey Eller to update the Pro Bono Committee page on the BLS website. One of the additional features will be the addition to BLS home page of a prominent link directly to “pro bono,” which will then lead the reader to links for pro bono service opportunities and other pro bono materials.

D. **Florida Bar Foundation Fellows Drive:** The Chair will again report at the Executive Council meeting the value and importance of becoming a Fellow of the Florida Bar Foundation.

VI. **New Business:**

A. **University of Miami Startup Practicum/Venture Law Project:** We briefly discussed this initiative which in a clinic format matches law students with start-up businesses, such that the students have the opportunity to follow the progress of legal work from the inception of the start-up through setting up its structure and handling any permitting or comparable services, for a soup-to-nuts immersion in starting up a business from the legal side. It is anticipated that by matching the students to the start-up the students may be able to continue the relationship after graduation.

B. **Expansion of Committee Membership:** The Committee devoted significant discussion and concern to the low attendance and participation of BLS members on the Pro Bono Committee. It was suggested that the Section leadership require that each substantive committee of the Section be required to designate a liaison member to attend the Pro Bono Committee. It was noted that this requirement has been tried in the past with mixed results. The Committee committed to explore alternatives for increasing participation.

[We were then visited by Jon Polenber, Melanie Damian, and Steve Chesal on behalf of the Executive Council. The next meeting of the EC will be in connection with the Annual Labor Day Retreat.]

VII. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: Business Law Section Retreat – Manalapan, Eau Palm Beach Resort & Club – September 2, 2017