

Pro Bono Committee, Business Law Section
Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2017, 8:30-9:30am
Business Law Section Annual Retreat
Eau Palm Beach Resort and Spa, Manalapan, Florida

Attendees: John Macdonald, Chair
Marisa R. Dorough, Vice Chair
Judge Edward LaRose
Judge Catherine McEwen
Judge Virginia Norton
William Van Nortwick
Curt Bender
Mitch Hyman
Janeia Ingram (participating telephonically)
Maxine Long
Aleida Martinez-Molina
Mindy Mora
Carlos Sardi

Meeting was called to order at approximately 8:38 a.m.

I. Introductions of all Attendees

II. Reading of Mission Statement

- a. Mr. Macdonald read the Mission Statement of the Pro Bono Committee:
The mission of the Pro Bono Committee is to achieve 100% participation in pro bono service by Business Law Section members and attorneys in their firms.
- b. Judge McEwen suggests revisiting the mission statement.

III. Old Business

- a. **Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the meeting held June 22, 2017, which were prepared by Mr. Macdonald, were unanimously approved.

IV. Ongoing Projects

a. Logistical Issues with Committee Meetings

- i. Mr. Macdonald raised that the Committee's last meeting was poorly attended, due to so many conflicts with other meetings and an inconvenient location far from the main activities. Over the last few meetings, we have had numerous logistical problems. What can we do to maximize participation and not conflict with substantive committees?
- ii. Judge Isicoff previously suggested we hold a telephonic meeting, in lieu of the physical meeting, before the other Bar or Section meetings begin.
- iii. Ms. Long suggests that a telephonic meeting may only be needed before the Annual Meeting because the Retreat does not pose as many conflicts.

- iv. Another suggestion was to have a pre-meeting by telephone, and then continue having the in-person meeting as usual.
- v. Mr. Van Nortwick proposed we plan a telephonic meeting for the week prior to the next Winter Meeting. Mr. Macdonald said we may try that, but we will “play it by ear.”

b. Report from Erika Garcia – Florida Bar Foundation

- i. Report was delivered by Mr. Macdonald, as Ms. Garcia could not attend
- ii. New Website: Florida Pro Bono Matters
 - 1. The Foundation has successfully launched the new website that is a statewide pro bono portal:
<https://thefloridabarfoundation.org/florida-pro-bono-matters/>
 - 2. It has been rolled out in most areas of the state; it is expected to be rolled out to Tallahassee and Jacksonville on September 12.
 - 3. Good participation already: 23 legal aid organizations have submitted 206 case opportunities in the system, covering 31 counties. Over 100 of those cases are active (taken). The system covers cases in 47 different legal practice areas.
 - 4. The Foundation is working on additional features for the website, such as (1) ability for one user to recommend a pro bono case to another lawyer, (2) mobile access, and (3) pushing newly-listed cases to attorneys via text message, according to attorney preferences.
 - 5. Discussion on how this Committee, and the BLS, can publicize this website to the BLS’ other committees and convey the breadth of platform. As a start, we can place link on our firms’ or organizations’ respective websites (either internal intranets or public websites).
 - 6. We also need to make sure the link on our site takes the user directly to the site with the pro bono opportunities.

→ Announcements of Business Law Section Executive Council Leadership by Section Chair Melanie Damien, Chair Elect Michael Chesal, and Treasurer Jay Brown (arrived 8:50 a.m.)

- a. Mr. Macdonald explains FloridaProBonoMatters.org and asks Leadership to announce it while visiting the other substantive committees and to ask firms to add it to their websites.
- b. Mr. Chesal suggests that the BLS could send a blast email to all members announcing the website.
- c. Mr. Brown suggests that we develop a brief blurb (and a few alternative wordings) to promote the website that could be included in the usual BLS blasts.
- d. Judge McEwen reminds us that business lawyers are not limited to taking a business-related pro bono case.
- e. Mr. Van Nortwick announces that The Houston Bar has sent educational opportunities for non-Texas lawyers to learn, become mentored, and help Texans

suffering from Hurricane Harvey on a pro bono basis. He is planning to consolidate the information and make it available.

- f. Leadership mentions that the next BLS meetings are January 17 & 18, 2018, in Orlando. The committee should think about whether we will have new leadership/chairs for next year, and make any financial requests as soon as practicable.

Ongoing Projects (continued)

c. Florida Bar Foundation – Fellow Drive

- i. Mr. Macdonald will continue to mention and support the Foundation's Fellow Drive at Executive Committee.
- ii. Foundation has had a booth at last two meetings, and is promoting option to give a gift to the Foundation in honor of someone else.

d. Florida Pro Bono Matters Acts of 2018 – SB 146, HB 57

- i. This is a very recently introduced bill introduced to help obtain pro bono representation for special needs children, and to increase training and compensation to GAL advisors. It is not directly tied to the Florida Pro Bono Matters website, but part of the Foundation's larger initiative.
- ii. CASA's idea, backed by GAL program, and likely to pass.
- iii. Legislation Committee needs to be aware of the bill and assess it. We bring it to EC's attention.

e. Non-Profit Clinics – Celebrate Pro Bono Week, October 2017

- i. Historically, the Committee members have been involved with different clinics around the state during Pro Bono Week. More recently, many of the clinics are controlled by the local legal aid provider.
- ii. Jacksonville's clinic will go forward as usual.
- iii. Report from Ms. Ingram in Tallahassee:
 1. The challenge is having enough volunteer attorneys to run a clinic. As a case comes in, it is usually funneled through Legal Aid or other non-profits to her and she reaches out personally to a volunteer – some are BLS members, but not all. Ms. Ingram shares her repository of knowledge regarding the protocol and attorney pool with North Florida Legal Aid Society.
 2. Ms. Macdonald says things are essentially the same in Jacksonville – individual opportunities are funneled through individuals, who are often volunteers.
 3. Perhaps the clinics will not continue as a point of emphasis, but we will defer to how it is evolved at the local level.
- iv. Mr. Bender, who is participating in the Business Law Clinic at FSU Law, explained that FSU (or he and others at FSU) may try to emulate Syracuse's veterans' legal assistance program. The recent veterans' entrepreneurs lab at FSU was limited in scope of pro bono services because the student attorneys have to be supervised. They have a need for more supervising attorneys around Tallahassee to help with the program or to establish an internship of sorts.

1. Ms. Ingram may be able to help identify attorney-supervisors.
- f. **Website Content – Expanded role as gateway for pro bono opportunities**
 - i. We need to make link to Florida Pro Bono Matters website clear and direct.
 - ii. We continue to encourage feedback and work on the Pro Bono Committee's Website.
- g. **Expansion of Pro Bono Committee membership/participation**
 - i. This Committee needs to continue to recruit new members.
 - ii. Prior to the Retreat, Mr. Macdonald contacted the chairs, vice chairs, and judicial chairs to request their attendance at the Pro Bono Committee meeting – and this seemed to work.
 - iii. Mr. Macdonald and/or Ms. Dorough will send an email reminder in late December/early January to the same chairs in order to secure participation at the Winter Meeting.

V. New Business

- a. **Consideration of Telephonic Meetings** – see above
- b. **Support for University of Miami Startup Practicum/Venture Law Project (Dade Legal Aid)** – no additional information
- c. **Florida Free Legal Answers (Florida Bar project)** – No additional information
- d. **Publicize and Promote Best Practices Guide for a Firm Pro Bono Policy**
 - i. We should include a mention of and link to the Guide on our Website in the same email blast about the Florida Pro Bono Matters Website.
- e. **Use of Money in BLS Budget**
 - i. No ideas suggested as to how to spend it yet.
- f. **Help for Houston**
 - i. Mr. Van Nortwick added that the largest legal aid program in Houston had its building completely destroyed by Hurricane Harvey and its flooding. They need all of their business equipment to be replaced. He is going to forward his information (gathered by Akerman) to Melanie Damien and make a presentation to EC at the end of the Retreat.

VI. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 9:26am.

VII. Next Meeting: The Winter Meeting will be held January 17-20, 2018, in Orlando, Florida, at the Doubletree by Hilton.