

WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
Executive Committee Meeting
March 23, 2019
Albany Law School
Albany, New York

A quorum being present, the Executive Committee meeting was called to order at 10:11 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Nicole Marlow-Jones, seconded by Carrie Anne Cavallo, to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2019 Executive Committee meeting and the minutes of the February 21, 2019 Executive Committee Amicus Conference Call. The motion passed.

President's Report

President Kolcon welcomed everyone to Albany and thanked the Capital District Chapter for organizing a lovely dinner last night. She also thanked everyone for their participation on the Executive Committee call two days ago to discuss and approve various legislative items in the Governor's proposed budget.

WBASNY has been exploring ways that we can increase our ability to get our message out regarding federal legislation. The Advisory Committee proposed an idea, which has been approved by the officers, of establishing teams of advisory members who would schedule meetings with federal legislators to discuss our positions on various items of federal legislation. The proposal will not cost WBASNY anything and would provide an additional avenue for re-engaging past presidents. A motion was made by Katherine Courtney, seconded by President-Elect Hay, to approve the proposal of having Advisory Committee members act as our federal "lobbyists." The motion passed.

The WBASNY Newsletter is out so please look for it in your email box. March is Women's History Month and we have our updated WBASNY written history and our WBASNY history video, both of which are on the website. We are always looking for video content, so if you are having an event, please consider recording part of it to be placed on our YouTube channel. Today, our Membership Committee is taking video testimonials on "Why WBASNY?" which will become a series of vignettes to be placed on our website and YouTube channel. In addition, the National Conference of Women's Bar Associations (NCWBA) is compiling a history of women in the law and women's bar associations, so if you have a trailblazer in your chapter, they are accepting articles until April 8, 2019.

President Kolcon attended the State of the Judiciary, during which Chief Judge DiFiore discussed the need to increase our state assigned counsel rates. Because the rates are so low, and have not been increased in 14 years, we are having difficulty getting attorneys to accept the assignments. WBASNY has many members who are taking these cases, and the substandard rates present equal access to justice issues and compensation fairness issues. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for WBASNY to support Chief Judge DiFiore's efforts to secure an increase in the assigned counsel rate.

Treasurer's Report

The taxes for last year are filed and Treasurer Rosenthal advised all reports are currently up to date. We are over budget on our accounting fees, so all chapters are asked to please get all reports in timely at the end of June so we can start with a fresh slate for the next membership year. While our fundraising to date is not far off from our budgeted amount, our membership numbers are down, so please continue recruiting new and renewing members.

Officer Presentation

Vice President Thompson led a discussion about the power of a commitment to diversity. The presentation challenged each participant to put herself in another person's position and to realize that each person brings value to an organization and to the business environment as a whole. She provided informative articles on the topic and stressed how fortunate we are that WBASNY is an organization that reaches across all races, ethnicities and backgrounds.

Nominations Committee Task Force

Every chapter must vote on the slate of officers and report the results to Recording Secretary Nickson by April 30, 2019. President Kolcon expressed disappointment that three (3) chapters were not represented at the nominations voting meeting for differing reasons, leading to a discussion of the proposals put forth by the nominations committee task force.

Nominations Committee Task Force Co-Chairs Marge Karowe and Anne Joynt presented an overview of the Task Force and its recommendations. In an effort to effectuate change quickly, the current recommendations do not involve by-laws changes. The Task Force polled each chapter, including the current president, immediate past president and any others they could locate. The Task Force attempted to focus on and provide proposals addressing the major concerns or perceptions that appeared most often from most chapters, as follows:

Co-Chairs: (1) election is open to anyone interested, should be geographically diverse, and each chapter has three votes, one for each chair position; (2) ballots will be counted in the room right after they are cast; and (3) chairs are elected to one year term and no co-chair shall serve more than two (2) consecutive terms without an absence from that office for two (2) consecutive years.

Voting Meeting: only a Delegate or alternate who has attended the candidate interviews may attend the voting meeting.

Minutes: will be kept for every meeting, including the identity of each chapter representative(s), and turned over to headquarters to be kept until next election.

Statement of compliance: each member of the nominating committee shall sign a statement of compliance.

Interview questions: the committee shall agree on interview questions to be asked of all candidates, but only by the chairs; committee members are limited to amplifying an answer or seeking an explanation (they cannot ask random questions).

Voting: will start with the position of President-Elect and move down the slate from there.

Additional items: (1) the absence of a letter from the applicant's chapter president does not disallow the candidate from being considered; and (2) if a chapter missed the first committee meeting, the delinquent chapter loses ability to challenge issues brought up at the second meeting; if a chapter missed the November meeting, the chapter loses the ability to propose a candidate (but a candidate can propose their own name); if a chapter fails to appoint its delegate/alternate by the third meeting (i.e., the January interviews), the chapter loses the right to vote and/or advocate for any candidate.

The task force also is requesting that WBASNY consider funding a chapter delegate or alternate to be able to attend the nominations committee meeting. There also was a discussion of looking into remote participation under extenuating circumstances.

There is an overall concern about various forms of advocacy on behalf of candidates prior to the interviews and voting meeting, so this is an effort to limit such communications until all applications are received. No chapter can or should be making promises to bind a chapter to future elections and a chapter can lose its right to vote if the violation is intentional and flagrant (the Executive Committee would decide if such a violation took place). The Task Force did not specifically address the issue of equalizing the votes because it would require a by-laws change, but it is a topic that could continue to be discussed as part of a multi-step process.

If anyone has further questions or comments, please contact Marge at (585) 287-6563 or mekesq@aol.com.

Online CLE Survey

All Executive Committee members were asked to kindly complete the questionnaire and return to Recording Secretary Nickson.

Legislation Committee

President Kolcon discussed some concerns and challenges facing our Legislation Committee, including chapters being underrepresented on the calls. We are hoping to more effectively bring the chapters together and improve our process on legislative issues to ensure that all of our voices are heard. If any chapter has a legislation committee representative with ideas on how to improve, we would like to hear from them. Alternatively, if your chapter does not have a legislation representative, please assign someone to participate on the calls and at the committee meetings so we can attain full participation and representation.

Housekeeping Reminders

Please get the dates for leadership training to your incoming presidents and treasurers.

New Business

Nicole Marlow-Jones advised of an event being held on April 3, 2019 at Syracuse Law focusing on unconscious bias where Chief Judge DiFiore is speaking.

Motion to Adjourn

A motion was made by Tina Hartwell, seconded by Nicole Marlow-Jones, to adjourn. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 12:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa H. Nickson
Recording Secretary