**Diversity Committee Meeting Minutes**

April 11, 2022 -- Noon – 1:30 pm

The Washington State Bar Association’s Diversity Committee is dedicated to implementing WSBA’s Diversity and Inclusion Plan. The work of the committee promotes historically underrepresented groups to enter and stay in the profession of law. The Diversity Committee does this through collaborative relationships and community building activities, which highlight the numerous societal benefits of a diverse law profession.

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**Present:** Sharon Sakamoto, Gov. Matthew Dresden, Gov. Alec Stephens, Danitza Casselman, Michele Fukawa, Megan Dawson, Nam Nguyen (co-chair), Gov. Lauren Boyd, Luís Beltrán, Minerva Gomez, Monica Lopez Reinmiller, Christopher Swaby, Raina Wagner, Maria Mia Little

**Absent:** SaNni Lemonidis, Mubarak Abdur Raheem, Gov. Sunitha Anjilvel (co-chair), Shirley Prasad, Cory Beetley, Janice Langbehn

**WSBA Staff:** Barbara Nahouraii, Diana Singleton, Saleena Salango, Nicholas Mejia

**Guests:** President Brian Tollefson, Alizeh Bhojani

Meeting Called to Order 12:04 pm.

There was recognition of Governor Elect Nam Nguyen.

**Exploration of Council Proposal**

Nam and Diana shared a draft charter that is part of the proposal for the Diversity Committee to become a council. They explained that the idea to become a council was to allow for more individuals of different backgrounds to vote and clear up conflicting language in the Bylaws and Committee and Board Policy. Currently, the Bylaws only allow active members to serve as members of the committee and only allow the Board of Governor (BOG) members to vote. The proposed charter would allow not only active members to serve but also inactive members, judicial status members, law school faculty, staff and students and members of the public. Everyone would be eligible to vote. In addition to the charter, amendments to the Bylaws and Committee and Board Policy would be proposed.

Committee members asked various questions about the draft including whether the number of members – 18 – was highlighted for a reason. Diana said it was a typo and not highlighted for any reason. She explained 18 is the same number that the Committee has had since it was created. The committee discussed whether to lower the number given the challenge of reaching quorum but ultimately decided to stick with 18.

There was discussion about whether there should be a certain number of active members on the Committee. Many people agreed that there should be at least 8 active members of the non-BOG members. Matthew made a motion for the charter language to indicate a minimum of 8 of the 14 non-BOG members. Alec seconded it. Lauren, Matthew and Alec voted in favor. Motion passed.

The potential for staggered terms was brought up among members. Diana explained that the current members’ terms are already staggered so if the committee becomes a council, the staggered terms would just continue.

Diana explained that we have sent the draft charter out for comment to the law schools, the Municipal and District Court Judges Association, the Superior Court Judges Association, the Minority Bar Associations and the ATJ Community. We have not received any feedback thus far. We will be sharing the amended draft with General Counsel Julie Shankland for her legal analysis. If she gives feedback and/or we hear from other stakeholders, we may need to call a special meeting if we need to make additional amendments and vote on a new charter.

It was confirmed that Nam and Sunitha would be the presenters of the proposal at the May BOG meeting.

**Joint MBA Proposal to BOG**

There was discussion about the proposal that the Minority Bar Associations (MBAs) submitted to the Bar regarding their suggestions for the BOG holding themselves accountable to their DEI commitments and values. Alec shared that he was going to recuse himself from the discussion about the committee’s view on the MBA’s proposal as he wants to reserve his individual perspectives and opinions at the BOG meeting itself. It was noted that if the BOG members are going to vote on the matter at the May BOG meeting should they do so in a formal capacity outside of the diversity committee. A great deal of back-and-forth discussion ensued on the matter for a period of the meeting.

It was noted that it would potentially be beneficial to at least have the non-BOG members submit a written letter of support to be included in the BOG meeting materials. Sharon Sakamoto and Raina Wagner volunteered to draft a letter and share with the committee at the May 7th meeting for a vote.

**At-Large Governor Interviews**

There was discussion about the need to prioritize which questions will be asked at the interviews. It was noted that it would be beneficial to ask the same questions in the same order and offering the same amount of time for both candidates. After deliberation regarding questions among committee members, questions 2, 3, & 6 are most favored.

Gov. Matthew Dresden made a motion to post those questions, seconded by Gov. Alec Stephens. The committee voted unanimously in favor of these questions.

**Washington Leadership Institute (WLI) Project**

Michele Fukawa introduced Alizeh Bhojaniwho is a fellow WLI cohort member. Alizeh explained that they are currently doing a community service project involving the creation of a guidebook for law students, “What we wished we had known: Perspectives from Underrepresented Attorneys”. It reflects personal experiences from attorneys from those going through law school and also perspectives from practicing attorneys. Other topics included are going into public vs private, financials, grants, loans, and other related materials. The below proposal was shared:

[WLI 2022 Community Service Project Proposal - Google Docs](https://docs.google.com/document/d/177b_HtHa6HZNEXdVSq5APG2IsjAL3Sjx666hCoO-QJE/edit)

Alizeh explained that WLI is launching it but they are looking for a partner who can house the project and keep the manual updated. The committee discussed this possibility and agreed that before it commits to anything new, the community should review all of its projects and prioritize at its May 7th meeting.   
 **March Minutes**

Gov. Matthew Dresden made a motion to pass minutes, which was seconded by Gov. Alec Stephens. Previous Minutes passed unanimously.

**Finalize May Retreat Dates**

Diana reported that the doodle poll shows that May 7th looks like the best option for the May retreat. Everyone agreed and suggested that Diana send a calendar invite for the retreat.

Meeting adjourned 1:37 p.m.