

# WASHINGTON STATE B A R A S S O C I A T I O N

## Small Town and Rural Committee

**Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting | Virtual Only**

**Wednesday, July 26, 2023, | 12:10 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.**

Via [Zoom](#) | Meeting ID: **879 0573 6111** | Passcode: **811616** | Call-in: **888-788-0099**

## AGENDA

1. Introductions, June Meeting Recap, and Approval of June Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrasek)
2. WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)
3. Career Center Discount Updates (Julianne Unite)
4. STAR Committee Recommendations Team Updates (Gov. Petrasek)
5. Subcommittee Report Updates, if any (Subcommittee chairs Laurie Powers, Gov. Petrasek, Betsy Penoyar)
6. Rural Practice Mobile Unit Updates
7. Financial Project Team Updates (cont. from June meeting)
8. Announcements
9. Other Business
10. Next Steps/ Conclusion
11. Next Meeting: August 23
12. Adjournment

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## Small Town and Rural Committee Charter

Effective: July 16, 2021  
as approved by the  
WSBA Board of  
Governors

### ***Purpose***

The WSBA Small Town and Rural (STAR) Committee is committed to strengthen and support the practice of law in the rural communities throughout Washington state. Members of the STAR Committee will work to ensure that the practice of law in rural communities is present, growing, and thriving.

Practitioners in rural communities are few and far between. Additionally, many of these practitioners are nearing retirement without a clear plan of succession for their clients, leaving a void of access to legal representation and counsel. The STAR Committee will guide policy & program development, serves as ambassadors between the WSBA and these communities, explore and advocate for creative and innovative solutions, and regularly assess the legal landscape in rural communities to determine if WSBA policy, advocacy and program development require further resource for sustainability and improvements.

The STAR Committee aligns with the authorized activities outlined in General Rule 12. More specifically, GR 12.1 (a) articulates the Washington Supreme Court’s regulatory objective to provide, in part, “meaningful access to justice. . .” while GR 12.1(d) strives for “affordable and accessible legal services.” In addition, the STAR Committee aligns with the authorized activities outlined in GR 12.2, in particular by providing “services to members and the public,” and “fostering collegiality among its members and goodwill between the legal profession and the public.”

Further, the STAR Committee furthers the WSBA mission to serve the public and the members of the Bar by providing focused attention on the unique needs of residents and members in rural areas both by improving access to legal practitioners in rural communities and outreach and development of a pipeline of younger rural residents to pursue a legal career and serve their communities.

### ***Definition of “Rural”***

For the purpose of the STAR Committee and reflective of Washington’s unique geographic and socio-geographic landscape, the definition of “rural” is as follows:

Based on the definitions produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (ERS) and an overview of Washington county population, we focused on counties with populations of less than 50,000 and more than 2,500. These areas are considered ‘urban non-metro areas not part of larger labor markets’ by ERS. As part of the working definition, and for ease, we have termed these counties as ‘rural.’ Based upon WA county population data, we’ve pursued a hypothesis that counties with 30,000 or more as rural, but likely more

adjacent to a labor market and perhaps have a varying set of circumstances that may differ from counties that are less than 30,000.

### **Composition**

Members of the STAR Committee should have demonstrated experience and/or interest in a thriving legal practice in Washington's rural communities. The STAR Committee will consist of 13 members and are outlined as:

- Chair (voting member)
- 2 Current or Former WSBA Board of Governors Members (voting members)
- 1 Active WSBA Member At Large (voting member)
- 4 Active WSBA Members from rural communities - see above for definition of "rural" (voting members)
- 1 Active WSBA Young Lawyer Member, as defined in WSBA Bylaws (voting member)
- 3 Law School Representatives (voting members, must be currently employed with a WA Law School which is not currently represented on the Committee.)
- 1 Active WSBA Lawyer Member currently employed with a Qualified Legal Service Provider (QLSP)(voting member).

WSBA Staff Liaison: Member Services and Engagement Manager or staff member in the Advancement Department, non-voting

Board of Governor Liaison: as assigned annually, non-voting.

### **Terms**

- Chair: two-year term
- Members: three-year term

### **Initial Committee Terms**

The first appointments to the STAR Committee should effectuate a staggered rotation of STAR Committee members. Therefore, the following terms are in place for the first appointment cycle only. All subsequent terms should adhere to the term limits stated above. STAR Committee member serving an initial term less than three years, should be considered an incomplete term. Therefore, the member is eligible to serve two subsequent complete three-year terms in WSBA Bylaws.

- 2 Active WSBA Members  
*1 member with two-year term, 1 member with three-year term.*
- 4 Active WSBA Members from rural communities (see above for definition)  
*1 member with one-year term, 1 member with two years term, 2 members with three-years term.*
- 3 Law School Representatives (voting, must be currently employed with a WA Law School)
- *1 member with one-year term, 1 member with two-years term, 1 member with three-years term.*

The following positions will begin as a standard term as set forth in this charter.

- Chair
- 1 Active WSBA Young Lawyer Member

- 1 Active WSBA Lawyer Member currently employed with a Qualified Legal Service Provider (QLSP).

### ***Scope of Work***

The scope of the STAR Committee’s work will focus on what the WSBA is uniquely positioned to do in supporting a sustaining and thriving environment for the practice of law in Washington’s rural communities. The STAR Committee will work with all relevant and interested stakeholders to collaborate where needed. The provision of direct legal services and civil legal aid to the public is outside the scope of the STAR Committee.

### ***Measures of Success***

- Increased awareness of the issues and possible solutions to address any gap in practicing members in rural communities.
- A sustainable pipeline of legal practitioners in rural communities.
- Increased numbers of legal practitioners in rural communities.
- The establishment of funding for programs and initiatives for the practice of law in rural communities.

### ***STAR Committee Roles***

#### **1. Community Education and Outreach**

Coordinated efforts to educate members and potential members about the unique needs, opportunities and benefits of a rural practice. This can include, but should not be limited to, comprehensive information on WSBA’s website, features in WSBA publications, presentations at high schools, law schools and community colleges. Meetings and events, such as a summit or symposium, to highlight the issue, convene interested stakeholders to share their concerns and strategize on possible solutions.

#### **2. Pipeline and Placement Program(s)**

Develop WSBA programming, or WSBA supported/partnered programming designed to build a pipeline of practitioners in rural areas as well as an incentive program to encourage members to explore a rural practice on a time-limited or multi-year timeframe. This role should explore a possible collaboration or strategic overlap with WSBA existing and future mentorship program(s). In particular, this role will require extensive strategic planning and identification of external stakeholder support and additional funding sources. Coordinate with law schools and other stakeholders regarding economic incentives to practice in rural areas.

#### **3. Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse**

Utilize existing and future WSBA resources to support and highlight job opportunities in rural communities. This role should include making it easier, and perhaps more cost-effective, to add job postings to WSBA’s service. Develop a clearing house to assist retiring members with succession planning and the buying/selling of a practice.

### ***Committee Evaluation***

The STAR Committee should conduct an assessment within five years from the date of Board of Governors' approval by 1) conducting a survey of rural practitioners to provide stakeholder feedback regarding the impact of this Committee to effectuate change in these areas, 2) assessing the scope of work to reflect impact and progress in this area and align with trends in the greater legal community, and 3) earnestly examining if the Committee is necessary to continue the scope of work.

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## Small Town and Rural Committee

### Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting Minutes

Saturday, June 22, 2023 | 12:21 p.m. – 12:57 p.m.

*Virtual meeting via Zoom*

**Committee Members Present:** Governor Kari Petrasek, Rusty McGuire, Kathryn Burke, Merf Ehman, Zachary Bryant, Laurie Powers

**Committee Members Absent:** Elizabeth Penoyar, Erin Fullner, Erin Lloyd

**WSBA Staff Present:** Julianne Unite – Member Services and Engagement Manager, Chelle Gegax – Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant, Kevin Plachy – Advancement Department Manager

**WSBA Board of Governors Liaisons:** Governor Sunitha Anjilvel

**Public Attendees Present:** Chelsea Baldwin, Michelle Lucas, Sophia McByrd Sherry, Nicky Blumm

## Introductions, March Meeting Recap, and Approval of May Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrasek)

Governor Kari Petrasek Called the meeting to order at 12:21 p.m. On motion by committee member Rusty McGuire, seconded by committee member Kathryn (Katie) Burke, by unanimous vote (6-0-0) the committee approved the May meeting minutes. Kari asked those in attendance for the first time to introduce themselves. Nicky Blumm, Director of Town Strategy from Lewis and Clark Law School. Erin Fortney, from Pro Bono Public Service Committee at WSBA, commented that their committee's Board of Governors liaison brought the STAR Committee and rural area crisis in areas like Tacoma, WA, to their committee's attention and they are Looking for ways to partner with the STAR committee.

## WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)

### Committee Applications

WSBA Member Services and Engagement Manager, Julianne Unite, advised that Applications have now closed, and that the committee received five applications for the three open positions. The leadership team will meet and make recommendations for appointments for new members to join the committee in October at the start of FY24.

## Subcommittee Report Updates, if any (Subcommittee chairs Laurie Powers, Gov. Petrasek, Betsy Penoyar)

Kari invited committee member Laurie Powers to share, no updates.

## Discussion of Rural Practice Mobile Unit

Kari commented that there was a brief discussion of this topic from previous meeting, which was initiated by Pilar Murray and Blanca Rodriguez. Julianne will forward any email communications from relevant stakeholders to Katie.

## FY24 STAR Committee Activities and Budget (Gov. Kari Petrusek and Julianne Unite)

Kari commented that there was a great discussion during the May meeting regarding FY24 activities and programs. The STAR Committee has requested a budget of \$55,000. WSBA Advancement Director, Kevin Plachy, advised that this would include \$5,000 for committee support and outreach event, \$10,000 is requested for the summit discussed at the Yakima meeting, and \$40,000 requested for placeholder for pipeline and placement project. The placeholder amount could include stipends for law students/ first year lawyers to intern at positions in rural areas.

Laurie commented that Gonzaga would be willing to make space available for the Summit. Laurie stated that it would be easier to define a date if we knew more of what would be planned for the agenda. Kari shared that she felt a weekend would be most appropriate for this event. The committee will need to determine a format and who to invite. Merf commented that they are torn between Yakima or Spokane. If it is a rural conference, it would seem appropriate to have in a rural area, but Spokane may be easier for people to attend. Kevin commented that it would be good to have a planning team to handle the logistics for the summit. Discussion points for the summit planning team could include: What is the goal? Will there be CLE's? Will there be sponsors to offset the cost? Kevin would like to be a part of the planning team for this, and recommended Julianne to be as well, to help determine what the WSBA could do to assist. Chelsea Baldwin commented that she likes the idea of mixing in CLE and suggested inviting department heads and judges. Kari recommended the solo and small practice section list serve. Kari asked for volunteers for the Summit Project Team – Laurie, Kevin, Chelsea, Merf volunteered. Sophia McByrd Sherry provided a link to the [Supreme Court Calendar](#) to aid in planning the date for the summit.

## Financial Project Team Discussion

Kari asked for volunteers for the Financial Project Team. The team is looking for ways to help with student loans, legislative approach, and federal laws. Kari asked if this was something the committee wanted to begin work on in FY24 or if it should wait. Merf suggested reaching out to the ATJ Board and recommended using FY24 to finalize a proposal, and then in FY25 taking that to legislature. The Committee discussed housing for students, interns, and new lawyers. Chelsea commented that it would be beneficial to have a tracking system for those that receive assistance from the committee.

## Announcements

None discussed.

## Other Business

None discussed.

## Next Steps/ Conclusion

Next Meeting: July 26

## Adjournment

Kari adjourned the meeting at 12:57 p.m.

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