**Diversity Committee Meeting/Retreat Minutes**

January 15, 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:** SaNni Lemonidis, Gov. Alec Stephens, Michele Fukawa, Raina Wagner, Nam Nguyen (co-chair), Mubarak Abdur Raheem, Maria Scavella-Little, Gov. Sunitha Anjilvel (co-chair), Megan Dawson, Sharon Sakamoto, Shirley Prasad

**Absent:** Cory Beetley, Luís Beltrán, Danitza Casselman, Janice Langbehn, Monica Reinmiller, Christopher Swaby, Gov. Lauren Boyd, Gov. Matthew Dresden

**Law Student Rep**: Laine Ellison, Minerva Gomez, Kanani Palafox

**WSBA Staff**: Dominique Shannon, Diana Singleton, Barbara Nahouraii (observing)

**Guests**: Andrea Jarmon, President Brian Tollefson

Reached quorum at 12:15 pm.

**Team Building**

Everyone split into small group breakout rooms to find 3 unique things they have in common. Some things in common for small groups include: all people of color, all wanting to diversify legal profession, all seen musical Rent, all played instruments, all traveled to Victoria, Canada, all went to college out of state, commitment to equity.

**December Minutes**

Mubarak made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Sharon. 7 approved, 2 abstained since were not at Dec. Committee meeting. Motion approved

**WSBA BOG Update**

Comments on Supreme Court Rules

Gov. Anjilvel gave update about the Supreme Court rules and the committee commenting on the rules with regard to changing from non-inclusive language to inclusive language. If we want to submit a comment, it can be brief. Board materials will be due by Feb. 21 for March BOG meeting. Changes are marked in red to make the language more inclusive, such as chair instead of chairman. There are also some changes, proposed by QLaw, around prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity.

Question of procedure came up: Diversity Committee needs authorization from BOG to submit comments, and need to go through GR 12.2 analysis. BOG may decide they also want to submit comments. BOG may have different position when they go to vote. Importance of Diversity Committee work is to articulate and ensure that WSBA is living up to the Diversity & Inclusion Plan. Hope that Board heeds our opinion because we represent diverse group of people and perspectives.

BOG materials due Feb 21 for March BOG meeting and comments on the Supreme Court rules are due by the end of April.

Megan Dawson feels strongly about commenting on Rule 8.4. She sees every day clients, victims of crime, in and out of legal system and are consistently misgendered and dead named. Stated that it should be a practice that every court recognizes someone’s pronouns and, as part of being an attorney in this state, we should be standing behind anyone who experiences this type of discrimination, which happens every day. Megan willing to work with someone to write comment.

Megan will volunteer and Gov. Anjilvel offered to assist. We also shared Megan’s email in the Zoom chat so that committee members can email her if they want to join.

Gov. Stephens made motion to approve the Committee working on this, to present to the BOG for March meeting. Sharon seconded. 10 in approval, no nays or abstentions.

Bar Structure

Chief Justice Gonzalez asked 3 questions of the Bar and looking at structure of WBSA.

1. **Are there changes in the law that require changes to WSBA**
2. **Even if changes aren’t required, if there was a change, what would the new structure look like?**
3. **Regardless of any of the answers to those 2 questions above, are there suggested changes as improvements?**

The first public meeting will be in March, but don’t have definitive date for meeting. If people want to comment during public meeting, want to have more information about how we view the Bar structure from a DEI lens. Gov. Anjilvel will have dates soon.

By next meeting, Gov. Anjilvel wants to have a timeline and something more organized to present as far as a response.

Gov. Stephens wants to make room during February committee meeting for a presentation from Executive Director Nevitt. Also mentioned that the work is for Committee but want MBAs to be fully aware so they can weigh in as well. Co-chairs agree that more information is needed.

Mubarak asked if we could read the report from Justice Fairhurst, to get more context surrounding what it means to change the Bar structure and it how changing the Bar structure might change DEI groups.

President Tollefson put the report in chat (WSBA staff will also include in February meeting materials). Since that report, there have been various court cases that have also come out so need to be aware that context has changed.

Diana mentioned thinking about ways that the Committee can educate themselves on the issue so can be informed. Dominique, Barbara, and Diana meet with an affinity group of folks that do DEI work at Bar Associations around the country. Dominique will check in with those groups and see what they are doing.

**At-Large Governor Election**

For Board of Governors: 2 that are designated for “diversity” and as bylaws provide, Diversity Committee is charged with vetting applicants for that role and then making recommendations of at least 3 candidates. It is now election season: district election will be first and then at-large governor election. Process that was used previously: interviewed every single applicant and then whole Committee deliberated to see who should be recommended.

Dominique will send out Doodle poll for either Saturday April 23 or Saturday April 30 to confirm date of at-large governor interviews.

There was also a question of whether or not we should post interview questions beforehand, or if post some questions and others are spontaneous. Want to make sure we ask all candidates all of the same questions. Megan disagrees about not posting questions- they should be posted as an accessibility issue and people process things differently.

Nam mentioned shortening the amount of questions, since ran out of time even with time limits. Gov. Stephens mentioned can have people submit their answers beforehand and ask people questions based on answers received.

**Subcommittee Reports**

Ran out of time to discuss subcommittees or meet in small groups. Discussion will continue throughout the year as subcommittees do their work. Co-chair Nam did encourage people to sign up for at least one subcommittee if they haven’t already.

**Strategic Planning**

Committee members and guests worked in small groups/breakout rooms for strategic planning. Used the SWOT framework (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities for Growth, [external] Threats).

Gov. Stephens thinks newer members need more grounding on what staff does vs. what the committee does. A lot of our work is done in subcommittee; Nam mentioned that a person’s voice and participation is clear in subcommittee and working together as a larger group not as easy.

**Strengths**: continuously highlighting DEI perspectives and issues, being able to do the work virtually, continuation of legal lunchbox CLEs

**Weaknesses**: difficulty reaching quorum, time constraints, unpaid volunteer work. Threat of bifurcation affecting our committee, constantly trying to defend ourselves and why work important. Need more bandwidth to do new and better work.

**Opportunity**: our work is primarily reactive and can be more proactive, continue to do Bar mixers throughout the state, opportunity to get more content into the Bar News, continuing to build/nurture relationship with MBAs, onboarding materials for new and continuing members who may want a refresher

**External threats**: folks who don’t agree our right to exist as a Committee- becomes a situation where we are defending why we should be able to do this work.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.