

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Committee

Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting I Virtual Only

Wednesday, May 15, 2024, | 12:10 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.

Via [Zoom](#) | Meeting ID: 815 7000 4025 | Passcode: 684632 | Call-in: 888-788-0099

AGENDA

1. Introductions and Approval of April Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrasek)
2. WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)
3. Subcommittee Report Updates, if any (Subcommittee chairs Laurie Powers, Gov. Petrasek, Betsy Penoyar)
4. Project Team Updates
 - a. Job Fair at Gonzaga (Laurie Powers)
 - b. Summit Project Team (Laurie Powers)
 - c. Rural Day of Service (Kathryn Burke, Kari Petrasek)
5. Rural Internship Grants Update (Gov. Kari Petrasek)
6. Legal Desert Summit in Las Vegas (Julianne Unite)
7. Announcements
8. Next Steps/Conclusion
9. Next Meeting: June 12, 2024
10. 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 Wednesday, February 21, 2024 | 12:13 p.m. – 1:21 p.m.

Virtual meeting via Zoom

Committee Members Present: Allison Foreman, Ashley Rae Cummins, Elizabeth Penoyar, Jesse Lamp, Governor Kari Petrasek, Merf Ehman, Rusty McGuire, Zachary Bryant

Committee Members Absent: Hunter Abell (unexcused), Sunitha Anjilvel (excused), Erin Lloyd (excused), Laurie Powers (excused)

WSBA Staff Present: Julianne Unite, Chelle Gegax, Kevin Plachy

WSBA Board of Governors Liaisons Present: Matthew Dresden

Public Attendees Present: Sophia Byrd McSherry, Sarah Wixson

Introductions and Approval of March Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrasek)

Governor Kari Petrasek opened the meeting at 12:12 pm. There were no new or first-time attendees. On motion by STAR Committee Member, Rusty McGuire, seconded by STAR Committee Member, Merf Ehman, the committee voted unanimously (8-0-0) to approve the March meeting minutes.

WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)

Kari advised that the BOG meeting will be held May 2-3 in Richland. Meeting zoom link will be posted on the WSBA website under BOG if anyone would like to attend virtually. Meeting will be held in person if anyone would like to be in-person.

WSBA Member Services and Engagement Manager, Julianne Unite, advised that Volunteer applications open May 1, prior to next scheduled STAR committee meeting. There will be several upcoming openings for the STAR Committee. If anyone in seats that are coming available would like to continue with the committee, they need to reapply. If current committee members are not interested in continuing service, it would be helpful to have members encourage others to apply. Term starts will be October 1, 2024.

Julianne advised that WSBA Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant (formerly) Chelle Gegax has been promoted to WSBA MSE Specialist, making her the official staff liaison to the WYLC. There will be an opening on MSE team for Program Coordinator Position to replace Chelle moving forward.

No updates from BOG Liaison Matthew Dresden.

Kari reported on Western States Bar Conference. There was a discussion on Artificial Intelligence and Wellness. Spoke with other bars regarding other currently faced issues and problems within their areas.

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

No updates from Kari.

No updates from STAR Committee Member Elizabeth (Betsy) Penoyar.

STAR Committee Member Laurie Powers was not in attendance.

Project Team Updates

Job Fair at Gonzaga (Laurie Powers)

No update from Ashley.

WSBA Advancement Director Kevin Plachy shared an email from Laurie - 17 employers joined the session, 40 student job seekers registered, 15-20 job seekers in the afternoon session.

Rusty commented that they had eight good interviews and will be hiring 2-3 interns as a result.

Summit Project Team (Laurie Powers)

Kevin provided an update on the Rural Summit. Registration page is live on the WSBA Store. Currently finalizing speakers and agenda to seek accreditation. Communications dept will produce a formal brochure for the event for members to use for marketing purposes. Speakers have been identified for almost all sessions. Nine attendees have currently registered. Targeting all active members, and one eblast has already been sent with two additional eblasts planned. Will also market via section leaders list serve, new members list serve, ATJ list serve and potentially others. Kari asked if STAR Committee members will be sent a special registration link that will allow committee members to register at no cost. Kevin commented that committee members could be provided a code, or WSBA Staff could comp the cost internally and accounting would grant access. Members would receive a registration notification.

Kari asked committee members in attendance to identify if they were planning to attend. Julianne advised that she had a current poll including Kari, Rusty, Ashley, and Katie. Kari asked if Jesse would be able to attend the summit. Jesse responded that he is still undetermined. Merf commented that they would be attending the Summit and would need lodging accommodations. Sophia Byrd McSherry advised that she would be attending.

Merf is seeking volunteers to help facilitate breakout rooms. Needing approximately 7-8 volunteers. Ashley Cummins volunteered. Kari asked if this was separate from the panel she was helping to lead/facilitate; Merf responded yes.

Merf is also seeking a moderator for the "Myths of Rural Practice" panel. Ashley volunteered to moderate this panel.

Kevin advised that there is currently a good list of sponsors for the event including WSBA Solo and Small Practice Section, Umpqua Bank, The Fetty Trust, and Petrasek Law. In total the committee has received

approximately \$4500 in sponsorships. Kari asked about additional sponsors that attend some of the other section midyears and larger CLE events. Kevin commented that the committee had decided to avoid vendor sponsors.

Ashley asked about reimbursement for travel costs for speakers. Kevin advised that they would be asked to submit a WSBA expense report and would be eligible for reimbursement as defined in the WSBA financial policy. Encouraged people to investigate both flying and driving, and WSBA policy is to reimburse the lesser of the two. Ashley asked if there was a recommended hotel for accommodations. Kevin advised that at this time, there is not a room block reserved, that speakers and committee members can choose to book at the hotel of their choice. WSBA fiscal policy allows for \$200 per night reimbursement. Chelle advised that the Ruby River Inn is the closest in proximity to the event site. Law students can attend for free, and Kevin has a code that law students can use at registration for the event.

Rural Day of Service (Kathryn Burke, Kari Petrasek)

STAR Committee Member, Judge Kathryn (Katie) Burke, successfully connected with a legal service corporation willing to partner with the committee. WSBA Advancement Department Manager, Kevin Plachy, shared information from previous rural/legal days of service, and materials related to these events can be found in the meeting materials packet starting on page 10. Kevin mentioned that he discovered a grant attached to the original day of service. The proposal involved WSBA partnering with a QLSP and granting money to them for participating in the program, with the original grant amount set at \$3000. The QLSP would handle public outreach and marketing, while WSBA could assist in recruiting volunteers or attaching a CLE to the event if desired. Kevin recommended developing a proposal and procedures for this initiative, along with budgeting funds for the rural day of service to ensure availability if the committee decides to move forward. He suggested budgeting a placeholder amount for FY25 into the budget for one or more event days, proposing approximately \$8500 for the event and volunteer reimbursement. Kari agreed with Kevin's suggestion and proposed conducting one event in the fall and one in the spring, possibly in conjunction with a STAR meeting or another event like the summit. She noted that this item would be further discussed in future agendas.

Additionally, Kari provided an update that internship applications were rolled out following the last meeting, with the application deadline set for April 22. Decisions on the recipients will be made around May 5. Julianne will ensure that all applicant information is made available in WSBA Community. STAR Committee Member Jesse Lamp, Rusty, and Kari will review the applications and make decisions on a recipient. Sufficient funds are available for 9 grants at \$5000 each. Kari requested that all committee members review their calendars for the first week of May to attend a special meeting to finalize grant recipients through a formal vote. She suggested holding the meeting on Friday, May 3, at noon, and asked Julianne to obtain Zoom information.

FY25 Budget Discussion (Kari Petrasek, Julianne Unite)

Kari informed the committee that a preliminary budget has been drafted. Kevin emphasized the importance of including all known factors that could impact the budget in this initial draft. Merf suggested that providing graduating law students with a \$2500 scholarship for the bar exam, particularly those going into rural practice, could be beneficial. Kari suggested that recipients might need to sign a

promissory note committing to rural practice, and Merf added that they could also provide a letter from their employer if identified. Kari proposed that this scholarship could potentially be separated from the summer interns budget item. Kevin noted that there are limitations on spending money from licensing fees, with private employers needing to confirm that interns primarily work with underrepresented groups, which could also apply to the proposed bar exam scholarship.

STAR Committee Member, Zachary (Zach) Davison, expressed the belief that reaching more people could be achieved through in-person events and physical travel to targeted locations, though he was unsure of the potential impact on the FY25 budget.

When asked if anyone else had ideas for events or meetings that might affect the FY25 budget, there were no responses. Kari stated that her goal for FY25 is to have at least two in-person meetings similar to the one held in Yakima. She also mentioned that the summit planning team will meet and debrief after the summit to determine if it will be a recurring event.

Julianne mentioned that the first draft of the budget also includes consideration for revenue, depending on the projects planned for FY25.

Announcements

None.

Next Steps/Conclusion

None.

Next Meeting:

Special Meeting: May 3, 2024 – 12:00 p.m.

Committee Meeting: May 22, 2024 – 12:10 p.m.

Adjournment

Kari adjourned the meeting at 1:03 pm.

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Committee

Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting Minutes Friday, March 3, 2024 | 12:09 p.m. – 1:12 p.m.

Virtual meeting via Zoom

Committee Members Present: Ashely Cummins, Jesse Lamp, Elizabeth (Betsy Penoyar), Governor Kari Petrasek, Merf Ehman, Rusty McGuire, Laurie Powers

Committee Members Absent: Allison Foreman, Erin Fullner, Erin Lloyd, Hunter Abell, Judge Kathryn Burke, Sarah Cuellar, Sunitha Anjilvel. Zachary Bryant

WSBA Staff Present: Julianne Unite, Chelle Gegax, Kevin Plachy

WSBA Board of Governors Liaisons Present: None

Public Attendees Present: None

Approval of STAR Internship Grants

Governor Kari Petrasek called the meeting to order 12:09 p.m. STAR Committee Members Jesse Lamp, Rusty McGuire, and Kari reviewed STAR Committee Internship grant application materials with assistance from WSBA Advancement Department Manager, Kevin Plachy, for appropriateness and qualifications. It was determined that three of the seven applicants met the qualifications as outlined for the grant. On motion by Rusty McGuire, seconded by STAR Committee Member, Merf Ehman, the STAR Committee approved (5-0-2) the grant applications for Hope Nelson, Shaw Lowry, and Olivia Perez. The applicants will be notified via email with instructions for next steps.

Next Meeting:

May 15, 2024

Adjournment:

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