

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Committee

Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting | Virtual Only

Wednesday, October 26, 2022 | 12:10 p.m. – 1:40 p.m.

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

AGENDA

1. Introductions, September Meeting Recaps, and Approval of September Meeting Minutes (Gov. Petrasek)
2. WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)
3. Subcommittee Report Updates
 - a. Pipeline Placement Program (Laurie Powers, Chair)
4. Discussion on the Definition of “Rural” Pertaining to STAR
 - a. Redefine Small Town vs. Rural
5. CLE/Webinar (Karen Duncan)
6. Career Center Discount Updates (Julianne Unite)
7. Future Meeting Dates (Kari Petrasek)
8. Other Business
9. Next Steps/ Conclusion
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 Thursday, September 15, 2022, | 12:12 p.m. – 1:11 p.m. *Virtual meeting via Zoom*

Committee Members Present: Allison Foreman, Elizabeth Penoyar, Governor Hunter Abell, Kathryn Burke, Laurie Powers, Merf Ehman, Sarah Cuellar (joined at 12:57 p.m.), Zachary Bryant

Committee Members Absent: Rusty McGuire (excused)

WSBA Staff: Julianne Unite – Member Services and Engagement Manager, Chelle Gegax – Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant

Public Attendees: Governor-elect Kari Petrasek, Chelsea Baldwin (joined at 12:57 p.m.)

Introductions, May Meeting Recaps, and Approval of May Meeting Minutes (Gov. Abell)

Star Committee Chair, Governor Hunter Abell called the meeting to order at 12:12 p.m. He advised that several committee members will be joining late due to prior engagements. Hunter thanked Governor-elect Kari Petrasek for chairing the previous meeting. Hunter reviewed agenda items from previous meeting.

On motion by Star Committee Member, Merf Ehman, seconded by Star Committee Member, Laurie Powers, the Star Committee unanimously approved (8-0-0) the August meeting minutes.

WSBA Updates (Gov. Abell and Julianne Unite)

Hunter provided updates regarding the ETHOS process and conclusion reached by the BOG regarding structure. The ideal structure determined is the current integrated structure and this report will be provided to the court in the near future.

Hunter advised that the APEX awards will be shown Thursday, Sept. 22nd, 2022. He Encouraged members to attend via live stream format, hoping that this would serve as an opportunity to reach more members of the public. The next BOG meeting is scheduled for September 23, 2022.

WSBA Member Services and Engagement Manager, Julianne Unite, advised that we are working on the FY23 budget proposal and will be presented to the Board of Governors at the September meeting. The budget will include a \$3000 budget for the STAR Committee's disposal. The annual report template can be found in meeting materials packet. All WSBA entities are required to complete an annual report which is then submitted to the BOG. This report is due October 7th, 2022. WSBA staff would appreciate a working draft no later than September 30, 2022, for review.

Subcommittee Report Updates

Community, Education, and Outreach (Kari Petrasek, Chair)

Kari advised that the committee did not meet as they are trying to focus on meeting with the Pipeline Placement Program committee's schedule as their intentions align.

Pipeline Placement Program (Laurie Powers, Chair)

Laurie advised that the committee met September 14, 2022 and discussed that Cindy Yeung has left the committee and Gonzaga will take the lead on schedule the rural practice information session scheduling with the WSBA. They also discussed timing issues between schools and felt that a 90-minute presentation around the 4-5:30 timeframe would be appropriate. The committee also talked about structure and about how to accomplish, having Judge Mendoza as a speaker, who could speak to the importance, diversity of places and practice areas. The committee suggested keeping panel type presentations to a smaller group and then breakout rooms based on interest. The law schools discussed a rural career fair and will likely move to this event March, since smaller communities tend to have a different hiring schedule than larger communities, and Laurie feels that this may help to catch more interest. It was also suggested that if we are moving students into places where they have not had interns before, there should be training around how this should be accomplished. This could play easily into the WSBA CLE request from Karen Duncan, presented at the August meeting.

Governor-elect Kari Petrasek and Star Committee Member Kathryn Burke joined the meeting at 12:32 p.m.

Julianne commented that she has gone through the establishment of a section previously, and that those guidelines are in the WSBA by laws. Julianne also commented that if a section was formed, that the committee may be disbanded as two entities typically do not work on the same scope of work. The BOG could potentially raise the question of what would happen to the committee if a section were formed.

Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse (Betsy Penoyar, Chair)

Star Committee Member Elizabeth Penoyar advised that the committee did not meet.

Discussion of Restructuring Subcommittees to Project Teams and/or Disbanding

Hunter recapped that the committee has three subcommittee that mirror items in the committee's charter. There has been discussion in previous meetings regarding the restructure of these subcommittees as their work tends to have much cross over. Hunter opened the floor to comments from members. Laurie commented that in the previous meeting there had been discussion of moving toward a project team format. Hunter commented that perhaps having smaller project teams with more specific ideas could be more effective.

Hunter advised that the upcoming fiscal year would be chaired by Kari Petrasek, and he will continue to serve as the immediate past chair and former BOG member. Hunter also advised that there are pending members of the committee waiting on final appointment by the BOG. The committee is still waiting on a representative from University of Washington. Hunter asked for further thoughts or comments on this

topic, or would the committee prefer to wait until the first meeting of the fiscal year. Star Committee member Merf Ehman commented that a funding and fellowship committee would be helpful. Long term projects could start sooner if there was a project group or committee working on them now, to set the groundwork in place.

Follow Up Discussion of WSBA CLE Topics

Merf commented that an ethics CLE in December would be helpful but wasn't sure how timing would work with the WSBA. Hunter asked for confirmation on what timeline would be expected. Julianne advised that typically 8 weeks is a good timeline, so now would be appropriate to contact Karen Duncan from WSBA CLE. Kari recapped that Karen was looking for info on half day, full day, mid-day/lunch time seminar, and that this could potentially be a series of lunchtime series on topics that the committee has discussed – what is it like, what do you need to know, what does it cost to live in and practice in a rural area? This could be spaced out over a time of weeks or months and recorded so that people could listen to some live and still seek the recorded options to complete the series. WSBA Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant, Chelle Gegax, offered idea of MentorLink Mixer topic of Rural Practice, and Julianne added additional context on how mixers work and their format. Kari advised she thought it would a good topic to have, but also felt that it would be most beneficial to host after the series of CLE. Chelle advised that mixers are currently held in a virtual format and could be replicated for this committee. Laurie asked if this would be geared at just attorneys, or would it be aimed also at law students? Kari commented that law students should have the opportunity to attend regardless of their ability to claim the CLE credit. Kari also commented that the schools could use the recorded version of a CLE to be shown in a group setting. Julianne advised that law students are already able to attend CLE's at no cost. MentorLink mixers are open to the public, at no cost, and law students are more than welcome. Kari asked if Julianne would relay information back to Karen Duncan of CLE regarding topics discussed for CLE ideas, and Julianne advised she will connect with Karen, and cc Kari and Hunter on those communications.

Chelsea Baldwin joined the meeting at 12:57 p.m.

Sarah Cuellar joined the meeting at 12:58 p.m.

Hunter welcomed Sarah and Chelsea to the meeting. Chelsea Baldwin advised that she found the committee on her own research and is from Cowlitz county. Not enough lawyers in her local practice, has issues in hiring. Commented that she has a strong interest in the committee as she is experiencing issues firsthand in recruitment and hiring in her area.

Future Meeting Dates (Kari Petrasek)

Kari advised that the committee discussed meeting bi-monthly but felt that this would allow for topics to fall through the cracks and/or for things to not be addressed as quickly as they should be. Kari offered ideas of meeting monthly for an hour, or larger quarterly meetings with shorter meetings in the off months. Kari proposed the third Thursday at noon, for one hour. Merf suggested that meetings could start shortly after the noon hour due. Hunter commented that it was discussed that longer meetings may be necessary in the inaugural year of the committee, but an hour would be successful once the committee was on its feet and felt that a one-hour meeting would be very doable. STAR Committee Member, Zachary Bryant, commented that current meeting date and time was conflicting for him.

Julianne, Chelle, and Kari will meet to discuss meeting times and dates and circulate a poll for committee members to provide feedback on their preferences.

Other Business

Hunter commented on loss of former WSBA president who resided in Eastern, WA.

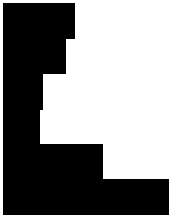
Next Steps/ Conclusion

Hunter asked for new business – none to address.

Adjournment

Hunter adjourned the Meeting at 1:11 p.m.

DRAFT



Hi Julianne,

Below is the blurb that will go up on the Career Center [“products/pricing” page](#) for employers on Nov. 15, which is around the time the November issue of *Bar News* will be out. This issue focuses on rural practice and will have an article about the work of the STAR Committee in which we will also publicize the free postings for “rural” legal jobs on the Career Center:

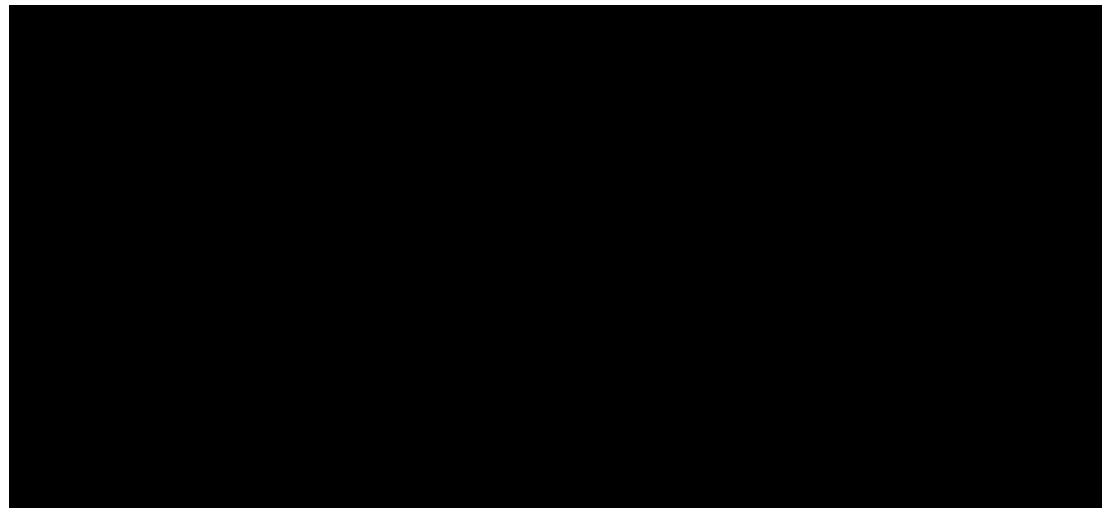
FREE POSTINGS FOR POSITIONS IN RURAL PARTS OF WASHINGTON STATE. Many rural communities in Washington do not have enough lawyers to meet the legal needs of their residents. In an effort to increase awareness among WSBA members about employment opportunities in rural parts of the state, the Washington State Bar Association and the Career Center are offering free 30-day postings of jobs for legal professionals in “rural” areas, defined as: “any job not in Thurston, Clark, Pierce, King, Snohomish, Spokane, and Whatcom counties, WITH the proviso that if the job is in a town of 5,000 or less within said county, it may also be posted for free.” To determine eligibility for a free posting, please contact memberbenefits@wsba.org with “**RURAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**” in the subject line.

We’ll also run the above blurb in the Take Note that goes out after Nov. 15, and we’ll include it in the “Need to Know” section of *Bar News* in future issues.

Attached is the step-by-step guide you requested to posting a job ad on the Career Center using the [REDACTED] coupon code. You can send this to eligible job posters along with the [REDACTED]” coupon code.

The [REDACTED] coupon code will be good through Nov. 15, 2023. We can track usage and it can always be extended if desired.

Let me know if you need anything else.



WSBA Small Town and Rural Practice (STAR) Pipeline Subcommittee

Recommendations, May 2022

Subcommittee Members: Merf Ehman, Cindy Yeung, Kathryn Burke, Sophia Byrd McSherry, Kari Petrusek, Laurie Powers (chair)

1. Each member of the subcommittee reviewed 4-6 programs from other states or organizations that address rural practice issues. At our subcommittee meeting on May 17, 2022, we reported back on what we learned, what initiatives we particularly liked, and from there had a broader discussion of what proposals we wanted to recommend to the STAR committee.
2. As a matter of structure, **we recommend that the STAR committee develop a multi-phased plan that incorporates immediate, short-term, and longer-term initiatives.** While other initiatives may also be appropriate as part of any of the phases, the pipeline subcommittee focused on the following ideas.

Phase I:

- a. Work with the three law schools to host a rural career fair in February 2023, with a mix of private and public interest employers and summer/post-grad positions. Gonzaga could take the lead in coordinating this with the other schools.
- b. Invite students outside of the WA law schools to apply to positions via the career fair. This can be easily done via the NW Consortium of Law Schools and NALP, and perhaps the Alliance Summer Intern Orientation.
- c. Provide training to rural practitioners on how to effectively supervise law student interns and onboard/train new attorneys, including providing materials and checklists. The law schools and CLS have such resources readily available.
- d. Request BOG funding to assist with marketing these opportunities.
- e. In preparation for the career fair, offer rural practice presentations/info sessions at the law schools.

Phase II:

- a. Obtain WSBA funding to hire a .5 FTE coordinator, with a background in rural practice and who knows the players, to lead the phased efforts. Perhaps locate such a position in a rural location or Spokane.
- b. Create a Rural Practice Section of the WSBA.

Phase III:

- a. Develop a post-graduate rural practice fellowship program.
- b. Develop a summer rural practice internship program/cohort. Explore the use of state work study funding, grants, and externship credit to ensure all positions are either paid or students receive academic credit.
- c. Develop a rural loan forgiveness program and/or other financial incentives.
- d. Look at providing free law school tuition to a defined number of students who commit to being rural practitioners