

TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, April 21, 2020
via Zoom

PRESENT

PRESIDENT *	James McCormick
VICE PRESIDENT *	Amanda Searle
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT *	Kenneth Blanford
SECRETARY-TREASURER *	Heather Young
TRUSTEE *	Jennifer Andrews
TRUSTEE *	John Cain
TRUSTEE *	John Cummings
TRUSTEE *	Judge Ronald Culpepper, Ret.
TRUSTEE *	André Peñalver
TRUSTEE *	Heather Swann
FAMILY LAW PAST PRESIDENT/LIAISON *	Gina Auter
YOUNG LAWYERS PRESIDENT/LIAISON *	Joshua Brumley
CRIMINAL LAW SECTION LIAISON	Laura Rodgers
	Dee Sontag
MINORITY BAR ASSOCIATION LIAISON	Lisa Mansfield
TACOMAPROBONO	Jennifer Ammons
WASHINGTON WOMEN LAWYERS LIAISONS	Cassidy Ingram
PIERCE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT	Presiding Judge, Gary Johnson
	Judge Stanley Rumbaugh
	Commissioner Diana Kiesel
LAW SCHOOL LIAISON	John Weaver
TPCBA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Kit Kasner
OTHER:	Laurie Davenport, Tacoma-Pierce County Bar Foundation Diane Clarkson, Past President TPCBA

* denotes voting member

ABSENT

None

* absences noted only for voting members of the BOT

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 8:00 am by President Jamey McCormick.

2. MEETING MINUTES

The February 2020 were not addressed.

3. UPDATES FROM THE COURTS—CURRENT STATE OF OPERATIONS

SUPERIOR COURT--JUDGES STANELY RUMBAUGH AND GARY JOHNSON

The courts and clerks offices are trying to keep as many people as possible out of the County-City Building.

There are 5 judicial departments out of the County-City Building in case there is a Covid outbreak then those departments can and will remain open and working remotely.

There will be no jury trials through May 4th, which will likely be extended another 6-8 weeks.

Speedy trial will be reinitiated as of 6/12, although that could be changed as well.

The Superior Court is trying out new electronic options to hold hearings. Friday motions are generally being decided on the pleadings and without oral argument. A few departments are live streaming their dockets, that live stream can be located on the Superior Court web site.

The Court is also considering a hybrid approach with parties testifying and all other witnesses testifying by declaration.

Judge Rumbaugh is chairing a committee on how to utilize the courts during Covid. They have explored how the bench can provide mediation for civil litigation to try and resolve cases to assist in managing caseloads when the courts open back up for trials. The mediations will be ½ days, via Zoom, and not limited to domestic relations matters. Each Judge may offer mediations in the area(s) s/he feels most comfortable. This program will continue until things are back to normal.

The Court is asking everyone to be flexible as we all negotiate the impact of Covid. The Court is expecting a huge backlog of civil and criminal cases once the courts are back open for business.

There will be a lag in time between when juror summons start being sent out and when jurors will be present in the building, so there will be a period of time when only bench trials can be heard. There is also a concern with criminal matters that once trials resume that they may also be an issue with speedy trial and attorney availability for the most serious charges.

The Court is looking at how to address social distancing and concerns that jurors will be unwilling to appear and serve, as many are retired and in higher risk groups.

Superior Court is down one Commissioner and the newest Judge to replace Judge Whitener will not be starting work until July. Judge Whitener's last day is April 23rd and Judge Nelson has agreed to take over her family court responsibilities.

The Prosecutor's Office is charging A and some B felonies, trying to keep the numbers in the jail down.

People are not being picked up on warrants except for serious matters. Most are receiving a cite and summons and many filings/chargings are being deferred until things calm down with Covid.

COMMISSIONERS—COMMISSIONER DIANA KIESEL

Western State is still open for business for the Court, Attorneys, and the testifying Providers. Some additional testimony is being taken by phone or video. Everyone is being screened for fevers and wearing masks/gloves.

Downtown Commissioner Lindsey is in Ex Parte and DV Screening, Commissioner Thornton is in 117 and Commissioner Farmer is in 100.

There are issues with Court Call that CSD is aware of, but please let them know if anyone has an issue.

4. UPDATES FROM THE SECTIONS

YOUNG LAWYERS—JOSH BRUMLEY

144 people passed the February 2020 Bar Exam. The section will be hosting a swearing in ceremony via Zoom on 4/28 at 3:00 p.m., and it will also be live streamed. Judge Spier will be presiding over the ceremony. Kit will provide the Zoom invitation and all are welcome and encouraged to participate.

Casino Night was moved to 9/11/20, which was the only date available.

FAMILY LAW—GINA AUTER

Things are oddly quiet in family law. The court is providing for telephonic ex parte hearings and most other motions are being decided on the pleadings only.

CRIMINAL LAW—LAURA RODGERS, DEE SONTAG, AND DIANE CLARKSON

Pretrial matters are being handled by email. The plan is to start hearing motions on 5/4 by video conferencing. Pleas are still being taken with all participants in masks and gloves. No one knows when the jury trials will resume.

Arrests and charges are down.

People with pending charges are in limbo, there is a lot of disconnect.

Most non-violent offenders have been released pre-trial.

DAC has a 4-5 person coverage times, with some people working from home and some working at court.

Domestic violence is on the rise and those folks are still being arrested.

MINORITY BAR—LISA MANSFIELD

The minority bar participated in a mixer with the Lauren Miller Bar Association and had two tables at the Lincoln Day Banquet. The Covid put a hold on everything else.

WASHINGTON WOMEN LAWYWERS—CASSIDY INGRAM

They are holding their happy hours via Zoom and are working on a virtual fundraiser for Hope Sparks.

5. UPDATE FROM TACOMAPROBONO

TACOMAPROBONO—JENNIFER AMMONS AND LAURIE DAVENPORT

They are open for business with most all working remotely and with client contact by phone, video, email. Most clinics are still operating, although Family Law need is down. Clients can still call and fill out intake forms online. The intakes are processed daily and follow ups scheduled. They have YouTube channels for access to information as well. The biggest need right now are questions related to Covid 19—emergencies, stays, evictions, etc. They expect a huge influx of need in DV, Evictions, and Family Law once the Stay Home Stay Safe order is lifted.

Ashely Duckworth is the volunteer coordinator if anyone has time to volunteer.

NW Justice Project is still working, just remotely.

They have concerns about funding and are applying for grants and other funding to help fill the gap. Tacomaprobono Night is 10/14 and the Run for Equal Justice has been cancelled for now.

6. UPDATES FROM BOARD LIAISONS

WSBA—BRIAN TOLLEFSON

The WSBA has a Covid Task Force.

There are upcoming free CLEs, including one on best practices on will witnessing during the pandemic and Zoom security. Check the WSBA site for specifics.

Brett Purtzer is the new District 6 Governor and he takes office in September.

Brian is the presumptive President-Elect as he is the only person to self-nominate. He anticipates being elected in June.

Brian attended a recent Superior Court Judges Associate Meeting and all the counties are experiencing similar issues as Pierce County. Discussions included how to get the courts working electronically and how to use technology moving forward.

There is a current discussion of what to do about the July Bar Exam in light of the Covid 19. Perhaps the exam will be held at a later date in September.

SEATTLE UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL—JOHN WEAVER

All the law schools in the state moved to on-line learning for the remainder of the school year. SU went to pass/fail grading and there will be no actual graduation ceremony. There are concerns amongst the staff and students about employment and the bar exam for the spring graduates. He doesn't know the school's position on diploma privileges for the spring graduates.

7. HOW TO SUPPORT MEMBERS

No report or discussion.

8. HOW TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY

No report or discussion.

9. CLE AND COMMITTEE/SECTION MEETINGS TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY

No report or discussion.

10. FINANCIAL REPORT--HEATHER YOUNG AND KIT KASNER

Finances were included in the consent agenda.

Membership and magazine ads are still generating revenue, but there have been no recent calls to Lawyer Referral so that funding source is down.

The web site employee has been laid off.

Kit has been looking for government grants, but so far we have not qualified for any. Including Tacomaprobono we have 18 employees.

Kit and the Executive Board are worried about what the Covid 19 will mean for the Bar Convention in October.

10. NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, May 19, 2020, 8:00 am via Zoom

11. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:48 am.