

Minutes of the Women and the Law Section Council Meeting
August 20, 2005, Austin, Texas

Call to Order

Mara Blatt called the meeting to order at 10:30 A.M., announced the presence of a quorum, and asked all attendees to introduce themselves. A list of names of those attending and absent is attached. She encouraged council members to place copies of the bylaws, list of names and addresses of the council, minutes, and treasurer's reports in notebooks for future use.

Ms. Blatt recognized Michelle Hunter, Deputy Executive Director of the State Bar, who said that the State Bar could provide assistance to the Section's treasurer for \$100.00 a year by writing all checks to be signed by the treasurer and completing reports to the State Bar. Ms. Blatt postponed further discussion of the topic, saying that the Section appreciated the information and might consider the offer at a later time. Ms. Hunter said that she would also review a bill recently sent to the Section from the State Bar for services rendered in May of 2003, commenting that the bill should probably be waived along with other bills sent years after services were rendered.

Approval of Minutes

Misty Ventura moved, with a second by Deborah Mackoy, the approval of the minutes of the annual meeting in June of 2005. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Ralph H. Brock presented the Treasurer's Report showing that the Section had \$10,516.88 at the beginning of the meeting. His report was accepted.

Mr. Brock asked that council members fill out the interactive reimbursement form that he sent by e-mail to request reimbursement for travel to Section meetings. Ms Blatt reminded everyone that only transportation to and from meetings could be reimbursed, stating that the Section does not have enough money to reimburse for meals and lodging. She said she appreciated law firms who were willing to pay expenses of their staff to attend the meeting, thus reducing the amount of money the Section will need to reimburse to its council.

Who We are and What We Do

Ms. Blatt stated that the Section has a broad mandate concerning women and the law. **Shannon Dacus agreed to consider whether the Section should begin a mentor program and whether the program should be for new lawyers, for interns in law, or for women in general. She will report to the council at a later time.**

Committee Reports

Ms. Blatt reported on the **Annual Meeting**:

She said that this year's annual meeting was well attended. She stated Carmen Sameniego, chair of the Annual Meeting Committee, along with other members of the committee, will need to decide whether the Section should sponsor its own continuing legal education (CLE) at the next annual meeting or co-sponsor CLE with other sections as it did this year. **Judy Ney and Melissa Dorman volunteered to be on the committee.**

Ms. Blatt led a discussion of whether the Section should produce a road show of CLE that would either begin or end at this year's annual meeting. The council agreed to explore having a road show, similar to one already produced by Ms. Blatt for the Appellate Section that would cost at least \$25.00 to anyone attending and be presented within one and one-half hours. After discussion, the Council voted to make the theme of the roadshow Ten Legal Things Women Need to Know About Health Care. The road show would travel to various cities and have local judges, lawyers, doctors, and social workers on the panel to discuss the topic. The roadshow would also be held at the Annual Meeting and in conjunction with local bar meetings. **Ms. Sameniego agreed to develop the syllabus, while Ms. Blatt agreed to help her with the programming and advertising aspects.** In addition, they will consider the possibility of applying for a grant from the Texas Bar Foundation or from the State Bar College to implement the CLE.

Misty Ventura gave a report on the **Membership Committee**:

She will send a letter to all non-renewing members of the Section, requesting that they continue their membership.

She will write an essay on why lawyers should be a member of the Section and have the response placed on the Section's website and in the newsletter.

She believes the committee should interface with the National Conference of Women's Bar Associations (NCWBA) and be an umbrella organization that supports and provides resources for the fourteen women bar associations in Texas. She will work with Kristie Brasfield to get information on webcites about the Section.

She moved, with a second from Mr. Brock, that the Section pay annual dues to the NCWBA until and if the Section decides not to pay the dues. The motion passed.

She asked the council to consider, at a later time, having a council member sit on the board of the NCWBA, explaining that NCWBA does not reimburse its board members for the expenses incurred for travel and lodging to meetings.

Shannon Dacus, Terry Danish, and Chantel Crews volunteered to be on the membership committee.

Chronologist Kathy Cannon reported on the **Chronology Committee**:

She will prepare a list for the Section's website of Texas women lawyers the Section has already interviewed in its quest to have an oral history of significant women lawyers. She will also decide who should be interviewed during this State Bar year.

Susan Hightower volunteered to be on the chronology committee.

Lisa Hernandez reported on the **Newsletter Committee**:

The newsletter will be published via e-mail in October, January, April and June. Deadlines for articles will be established later and communicated to the council. Carolyn F. Moore and Deborah Mackoy volunteered to be on the newsletter committee.

The council agreed that each newsletter should have a legal update on an area of law, emphasizing what should be of concern to women in that particular area. **Teresa. Oxford will procure an article on bankruptcy, Terry Danish will write on labor and employment, Misty Ventura will write on land use, and Deborah Mackoy will write on family law.**

Mara Blatt reported on the **Nominations/Awards Committee**:

She will speak with Beryl Crowley, Executive Director of the Texas Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism (TCLEP) about possibly combining the Sarah T. Hughes Award from the Section with the Sandra Day O'Connor Award of the TCLEP. Both awards draw from the same pool of nominees because they have the same nomination criteria.

Ms. Ventura moved, with a second from Shannon Dacus, that the Chair of the Section be authorized to sign a letter of nomination when a nomination packet has already been prepared on the recommendation of any council member if the Chair does not receive a negative vote from any other member of the Council during the first 24 hours after the Chair notifies the Council of the recommendation. The motion passed

Ms. Ventura moved, with a second from Chantel Crews, that if a council member is nominated for an award or knows of someone who is nominated for an award and wants a letter of support from the Section, the Chair is authorized to sign a letter of support, which has been prepared and sent to the Chair, unless the Chair receives a negative vote from any other member of the Council during the first 24 hours after the Chair notifies the Council of the request. The motion passed.

Teresa Oxford volunteered to be on the nominations/awards committee and will send Ms. Blatt a list of awards for which the Section might want to nominate individuals.

Ms. Oxford reported on the **Website Committee**:

She requested that the Council send her by the end of August names of people who can develop a website and/or keep a website updated. She will get bids from the names she receives and request a vote by e-mail from the council. She said that we do not have the pass code to update the Section's website, which is three years out of date. Tonya Carter volunteered to be on the website committee.

Ms. Blatt said that the council should be prepared to take action soon on whether the Section should have a sponsor such as a department store or legal publisher for its website.

Tonya Carter agreed to help Teresa Oxford with the Website, specifically in the area of developing funding for the Website by taking on website advertisers.

Calendaring:

Future council meetings:

Monday, October 17, 2005 from 5:00 P.M. until 7:00 P.M. by telephone
Monday, January 23, 2006 from 5:00 P.M. until 7:00 P.M. by telephone
Saturday, April 8, 2006 in Austin, from 10:30 A.M. until 2:00 P.M.
Friday, June 16, 2006 Annual Meeting in Austin

Schedule for newsletter submissions will be determined at a later time.

In November of 2005, we need to have representatives at the New Lawyer induction in Austin. **Susan Hightower and Kathy Cannon agreed to organize that effort.**

In March of 2006:

We need to order plaque for chair.
We need to check on whether we have items to be presented to award winners.
We need to request our free advertisement to be placed in the *Bar Journal*.

By May of 2006:

We need to have selected award winners.
We need to have representatives at the New Lawyer induction.

Fundraising

Due to the work of Ronnie Harrison and Leo Ney in selling book bags that could be stuffed with books at the Annual Meeting, the Section will be able to donate \$1542.39 to the Women's Advocacy Project and monies collected by Ms. Harrison from council members who had not had an opportunity to purchase book bags. Ms. Harrison asked that Ms. Blatt send both sums of money to the Women's Advocacy Project.

Ms. Blatt said that during the next meeting the council should discuss whether to continue the project of selling book bags and if we decide to continue the project, we should determine how each of us can help Ms. Harrison and Mr. Ney.

New Business

Ms. Blatt explained that Texas Lawyers Care will soon publish a pocket sized 2 year calendar that they will distribute all over the State of Texas and have requested money from the Section to be a sponsor. The calendar has a list of sponsors on the outside back page. Melissa Dorman moved, with a second from Susan Hightower, that the Section donate \$100.00 to help publish the calendar if the \$100.00 is enough to get the Section's name listed on the calendar as a sponsor. The motion passed.

Deborah Penner and Rita Lucido, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Women in the Profession Committee came into the meeting to introduce themselves and to meet council members.

Ms. Blatt told attendees that State Bar President Eduardo Rodriguez has planned to present Futures Conferences in Dallas, Houston, and Austin that will be free for all Texas lawyers. She also handed out brochures announcing the Sixth Annual Texas Conference for Women in Austin on October 20, 2005.

Ms. Blatt adjourned the meeting at 2:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted:

Carolyn F. Moore
Secretary
August 25, 2005