

Montana Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission

March 3, 2023

Zoom Video Conference

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Justice Beth Baker, Ed Bartlett, Lillian Alvernaz, Hon. Stacie Four Star, Hon. Leslie Halligan, Kekek Stark, Katy Lovell, Alison Paul, Olivia Riutta, Margaret Weamer.

Commissioners Absent: Hon. David Carter, Rick Cook, Jacob Griffith, Aimee Grmoljez, Hon. John Kutzman, Juli Pierce, Rep. Katie Sullivan.

Others Present: Alissa Chambers, McKayla Henson, Emma Schmelzer, Grace Loveless, Megan Dishong, Franklin Runge, Patty Fain, Kim Dudik, and Krista Partridge.

Call to Order & Introductions

Justice Baker called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m., and she welcomed the new State Law Librarian Franklin Runge. She also asked participants to introduce themselves.

Approval of December Meeting Minutes

Justice Baker asked for corrections on the December meeting minutes. There were no corrections offered and the minutes were approved without objection.

Policy & Resources Committee Update

Justice Baker reported that the civil legal aid bill was tabled in the Senate Judiciary Committee during the first week of the legislative session. She thanked everyone who reached out regarding the proposed legislation that would have impacted IOLTA funds. The legislation failed, but it will likely come up again in the next session and we should be prepared.

Self-Represented Litigants Committee Update

Grace Loveless reported that a court forms summit is scheduled for March 15 and she will send details to the group. She also said that law library staff will be doing an outreach event at the Lewis & Clark County Library on March 29. The event will include education about family law forms and the self-help law center staff will be on hand to review forms. She asked members to spread the word about this event.

Outreach and Communications Committee Update

Katy Lovell said that the committee had been on standby for any requests related to the civil legal aid funding bill and she had nothing additional to report.

MLSA Update

Alison Paul reported that while the State of Montana is now out of money for rental assistance, MLSA still has funds under our contract with the Department of Commerce and continues to process rental assistance payments and provide legal assistance for tenants facing eviction. Alison also reported that the Tribal Advocacy Incubator Program just completed its first year of training and we are now recruiting a new group of participants. This program was first funded by an LSC

grant and is now funded through a federal Tribal Civil and Criminal Assistance Program grant. MLSA is also revamping the MontanaLawHelp website through a technology grant from LSC, and we recently launched an online garnishment calculator and consumer debt tools. An online child support calculator is still under production. In addition, MLSA recently secured funding for an elder law practice that will fund a full-time attorney and legal assistant. MLSA's previous elder law grant was limited to elder victims of crime and abuse, but the new funding is not restricted to crime victims.

Alison also reported that she and MLSA's Communications Manager, Jami Campbell, and board member Sean Morrison, are scheduled to visit Montana's congressional delegation in Washington D.C. next week. They will meet with Rep. Zinke, and staffers for Sen. Tester and Sen. Daines. Rep. Rosendale's office did not respond to our request for a meeting. She added that we are tracking family law, housing, and poverty-related bills in the Montana legislature. MLSA cannot lobby, but we can respond to requests from legislators for testimony related to specific bills. One bill that we are tracking is House Bill 282 that would decrease the response time in eviction complaints from 10 to 5 days.

Strategic Plan & Committee Assignments

Justice Baker reviewed the standing committees and assignments, and the Strategic Plan that was circulated to the members in advance of the meeting. She said that we need to reactivate the Strategic Planning Committee. Juli Pierce has a lot of experience in strategic planning and is willing to join the committee. Alison Paul and Katy Lovell are willing to continue on the committee. Patty Fain and Alissa Chambers also volunteered to join the committee. McKayla Henson noted that Ann Goldes-Sheahan had indicated a willingness to participate, but that Judge Carter was not able to continue on the committee. Patty Fain offered to canvas members regarding the status of existing initiatives and any new initiatives so that the committee has a good starting place. A meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee will be convened in early April.

Public Comment and Next Meeting Dates

Justice Baker asked for public comment. There was no public comment. The 2023 meeting dates are listed on the agenda. The meeting was adjourned at 10:39 a.m.