

**ENRLS Council Q1 Meeting Minutes – February 17, 2022– 5:00 pm**  
**Zoom Meeting**

**I. Welcome, Introductions, & Recognitions – Nathan Block**

Block opened the meeting at 5:01 pm, and proceeded with roll call:

**A. ENRLS Council and Committee Co-Chairs Present via Zoom:**

Nathan Block, Pete Wahl, Erin Chancellor, Mike Dillinger, Lisa Dyar, David Klein, Ashleigh Myers, Amber Ahmed, Kristen Fancher, James McGuire, Steve McMillen, Mary Mendoza, Paul Sarahan, Walt Shelton, Anne Austin, Alia Vinson, Buck Benson

**B. ENRLS Council and Committee Co-Chairs Absent:**

Marcella Burke, Chris Schlag, Ty’Meka Reeves-Sobers

**C. Others Present via Zoom:**

Alessandra Papa

The business agenda began with the Secretary’s Report.

**II. Secretary’s Report – Lisa Dyar**

**A. Approval of minutes of the ENRLS Council Q4 Meeting**

Dyar circulated draft minutes for the ENRLS Council Q4 Meeting, held virtually on October 20, 2021 prior to the meeting. Edits received prior to the meeting were incorporated. No further corrections or edits were offered at the meeting. Dyar moved to approve the minutes, and Block seconded the motion. The Council unanimously approved the minutes.

**III. Treasurer’s Report – Mike Dillinger**

**A. Review latest financial reports**

Dillinger reported that as of February 1, 2022, ENRLS had ~\$391k in assets and ~\$13k in liabilities for a fund balance of ~\$378k. During 2021, comparable numbers were ~\$337k in assets (versus ~391k now), ~\$5k in liabilities (versus ~\$13k now) and ~\$331k balance (versus ~\$378k now). As a result, the Section is in better financial health compared to last year. This status is largely attributable to the Section’s sustained commitment to maintain financial discipline. Although total expenses increased from the prior year, the Section’s revenue also increased about ~10k higher than the increase in expenses.



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**B. ENRLS membership fee adjustment**

ENRLS membership fee adjustment – Block reported that he had sent an inquiry for section dues-related data to the State Bar. Having not received a response, Block followed up on February 17, 2022. Palmer and other committee members discussed continued interest in raising the Section’s annual membership fee to be on par with other sections of the Bar, in part because the Section has not raised rates in several years. Block suggested that with additional data the Q2 meeting could include a meaningful discussion of this topic to support the Section’s continued healthy financial status.

**IV. Committee Updates & Recommendations**

**A. Education Committee – Amber Ahmed & Alia Vinson, Co-Chairs**

**1. 2022 Superconference Update**

Mendoza reported that the Superconference planning committee began planning for an in-person Superconference to be held August 4-5, 2022 at the Four Seasons. A Wednesday night session is also tentatively under consideration. In addition, the planning committee has received a proposed contract from the Four Seasons with less favorable cancellation terms than during the past two years (full cancel in 2020 due to virtual conference; permissive cancellation terms close to date of event in 2021 due to limited in person attendance). Mendoza reported she would advocate for as many cancellation protections and fewest commitments as the Four Seasons would negotiate.

Mendoza reported that the Sponsorships Committee did a great job in 2022. Sponsors continued to express interest in a reduced registration rate as part of a sponsorship package. Securing timely registrations from sponsors has been an issue. Mendoza suggested communicating up front with potential sponsors that registration needs to occur promptly after committing to sponsorship (individual names can change, but the planning committee cannot be in the position of holding spots, turning others away while waiting on sponsors to complete registration).

**2. 2022 Changing Face of Water Rights Conference Update**

Vinson reported that the Changing Face of Water Rights Conference was underway through February 18, 2022 at the Hyatt Hill Country Resort in San Antonio. The State Bar decided to change the format from in person to virtual on very short notice. This caused presenters to have to record presentations about two weeks earlier than scheduled, which was a very challenging situation. Participants at the conference struggled through the



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virtual format, and attendance was down about 11 percent from the prior two years.

**3. 2022 Climate Change Symposium Update**

Block reported that planning for the April 14, 2022 Climate Change Symposium at the Bob Bullock State History Museum is progressing. The speaker commitments have filled most panels, and he was looking to include speakers from nongovernmental organizations and EPA related to renewables, transportation, or other climate topics. Sponsorship commitments have been received to support efforts to keep costs on budget. The planning committee has continued to take a data driven approach to holding the conference in person, and the pattern in Texas was promising for an in person meeting in April 2022.

Myers provided an update on the TELJ Symposium Special Edition. The Symposium Special Edition will include a broader range of topics, some shorter pieces along with longer bar review articles. The content has been edited and was submitted to the publisher the day of the Q1 meeting, which puts the Section in good shape to provide physical copies at the Symposium. The current student editorial board at UT Law is in the process of turning over for next year. Myers announced that Alessandra Pape will be the Editor in Chief next year and looks forward to continuing to work with Pape.

Palmer commended Block on efforts to bring the Symposium idea to fruition. Block and McMillen will coordinate to follow up on status of registration and sponsorship payments.

**B. Diversity, Engagement, and Inclusion Committee – Ty’Meka Reeves-Sobers, Chair**

No update.

**C. Law School Programs Committee – Walt Shelton & Kristen Fancher, Co-Chairs**

Shelton reported the committee was able to hold its first in-person program at Baylor since 2019 on February 16<sup>th</sup>. Fancher, Chancellor, Shelton, and a third year law student from Baylor participated on the panel. McMillen requested information about the program to include on the Section’s website. Scholarships for the Fall 2021 semester included six recipients from Baylor (2), St. Mary’s (2), North Texas (1) and Thurgood Marshall (1). The committee plans to take small steps to move back in person going forward. Tech and St. Mary’s are likely next targeted schools for visits and the site of the Council’s Q4 meeting. Shelton plans to ask an environmental law professor to recommend a student to participate on the panel as inclusion is an opportunity to promote students and demonstrate visible representation to show how the Section cares about law students. McMillen



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proposed adding a dedicated page to the Section website for law school program information.

Kelley reported updates on the 31 scholarship applicants this year, which is more than double the prior year's applications. Selection is planned to occur in February. Kelley shared information about the General Land Office's decision to back out of participation in the program during the last three years. The committee is concerned the placement of interns by the Section is not conducive with the GLO program. Austin and Vinson suggested the committee provide GLO with notice that the section is considering not partnering with the GLO going forward. TCEQ is willing to accept additional interns. Kelley suggested the Council consider a decision at the Q2 meeting.

**D. Publications & Communications Committee – Ashleigh Myers, Chair**

1. *Texas Environmental Law Journal (TELJ)*

Acevedo reported that articles for the second issue in Spring 2022 are firmed up, and requested information from committee members seeking to contribute.

2. *Sponsorship of Essentials of Texas Water Resources (7<sup>th</sup> edition)*

No update.

**E. Pro Bono & Community Outreach Committee – Buck Benson and Chris Schlag, Co-Chairs**

Benson reported that the Section had not made any donations in the prior two years due to budgetary modifications during the COVID pandemic. Provided financial strength remains healthy, the committee is considering organizations to support in 2022. Keep Texas Beautiful is an Austin-based organization that maintains the largest community network in the state of events, river cleanups, tree plantings and more. KTB's members are primarily governmental entities. The committee is evaluating potential benefits from a donation and interest in providing a link to KTB's calendar and website to boost publicity for KTB.

**F. Sponsorship & Membership Committee – Heather Palmer & Ty'Meka Reeves-Sobers, Co-Chairs**

Palmer reported that the committee will begin to focus on Superconference sponsorships. Palmer will work with Mendoza to confirm sponsorship levels and benefits, and will begin reaching out with solicitations. Discussion included suggestions to post notice of sponsorship opportunities on LinkedIn to promote and generate interest in joining the Section.



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**G. Website & Technology Committee – Steve McMillen & Paul Sarahan, Co-Chairs**

McMillen reported that the committee is always looking for content to post on the ENRLS website. Block committed to circulate and provide an updated standing committee list. Discussion included incorporation of journal publication information, Buck Wynne scholarship recipients, coming events, photos, law school affiliations, Corwin internship application materials, and updates to pro bono activities and CLE programs.

**H. Social Media Committee – David Klein, Chair**

Klein reported lack of content for social media messages, and that the Council needed to be repeating, reposting, and amplifying the messages. Ahmed added that advance notice of any coming updates and ideal timelines for posting would be helpful in planning.

Chancellor raised the topic of whether the Section should continue to pay for the posting service. She explained that the Section does not have a high volume of posts, and the mechanics of posting are not sophisticated or difficult. Klein may be working on a recommendation on this topic to better utilize the contracted services. The Council could review and vote via email. McMillen reported that social media management is a fixed fee for the vendor.

**V. OTHER / NEW BUSINESS**

Block requested nominations for potential council members for the Nominating Committee. Dillinger suggested that representation by an attorney with a public interest or nongovernmental organization viewpoint would be of interest.

Block reported that the Section is able to nominate a Section representative for the State Bar Board of Directors. Only one representative is selected from each section class (small, medium, large), and ENRLS is classified as a large section. The Bar expects directors to attend all of the SBOT Board meetings. The role requires a time commitment, and officers of the Section are discouraged from taking on the role. The deadline for nominations is in May.

Block discussed the Q2 meeting venue. The Houston Bar Association does not plan to return to in person meetings until June, but June is too close to the Q3 meeting in August. The members present reached a consensus to hold the Q2 meeting via Zoom, and expects to meet in person in August.

**VI. ADJOURN**

Wahl moved to adjourn the Q1 meeting. Dillinger seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 6:23 pm.

