

**ENRLS Council Q4 Meeting Minutes – October 26, 2022 – 1:30 p.m.**  
**In Person Meeting at Pillsbury Houston Office and via MS Teams**

**I. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, & RECOGNITIONS – Pete Wahl**

Wahl opened the meeting at 1:41 p.m. and proceeded with roll call:

**A. ENRLS Council and Committee Co-Chairs Present In Person:**

Pete Wahl, Lisa Dyar, Kristen Fancher, Nathan Block, Ty'Meka Reeves-Sobers, Anne Austin, Erin Chancellor, Marcella Burke, Adam Friedman, Walt Shelton

**B. ENRLS Council and Committee Co-Chairs Present via MS Teams:**

Alia Vinson, Ashleigh Myers, Paul Sarahan, Amber Ahmed, Adrian Shelley, Kimberly Kelley

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

Mike Dillinger, Mary Mendoza, Steve McMillen, Catarina Gonzales

**II. SECRETARY'S REPORT – Lisa Dyar**

**A. Approval of minutes of the ENRLS Council Q3 meeting and Annual meeting**

Dyar circulated draft minutes for the ENRLS Council Q3 meeting, held virtually on August 3, 2022, prior to the meeting. Edits received prior to the meeting were incorporated. No further corrections or edits were offered at the meeting. Chancellor moved to approve the minutes, Austin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**III. TREASURER'S REPORT – Kristen Fancher**

**A. Review latest financial reports**

Fancher reported that as of August 31, 2022, ENRLS had \$609,329 in assets, \$195,905 in liabilities, and a fund balance of \$413,434. During 2021 for the same timeframe (through August 2022), ENRLS had \$495,584 in assets, \$114,788 in liabilities, and a fund balance of \$380,830. As a result, the Section is in better financial health by \$113,711 compared to the same timeframe last year. This status appears to be largely attributable to the Section's sustained commitment to maintaining financial discipline and its continued increase in sponsorships for conferences. In 2022, we had another great year with \$74,860 in Superconference sponsorships.

**B. Update regarding ENRLS invoicing**



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Wahl discussed a recent issue presented by an invoice received from a Hotmail account and related conversations with the Bar about invoicing and payment processors such as Stripe. The issue has been resolved. Section committees should be aware and adjust procedures as needed to ensure functionality of payment processes (e.g., Superconference registration, conference expenses and other incoming invoices).

**C. Current expense reimbursement form**

Wahl reminded the Council that attendance at meetings in person is encouraged and that travel expenses are reimbursable. A reimbursement form was circulated in an email dated October 20, 2022 that included the agenda and meeting documents for the Q4 meeting.

**IV. COMMITTEE UPDATES & RECOMMENDATIONS**

**A. Nominating Committee – Nathan Block, Chair**

**1. Update**

Block reported that the Nominations Committee will be seeking nominations at the beginning of 2023 and encouraged Council members to think about Section members who may be interested in serving on the Committee.

**2. Recommendations / discussion**

General discussion included interest in increasing diversity of geographic areas within the state, and addition of in-house counsel members to the Council.

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

**1. Recap regarding 2022 Superconference – Amber Ahmed**

Ahmed reported that Mendoza is working to negotiate the next contract with the Four Seasons and she expects to have a signed contract by the next Council meeting. The Superconference planning committee is considering a registration fee increase due to increased costs at the hotel.

**2. Update regarding 2023 Superconference – Amber Ahmed**

General discussion included raising the conference registration fee, increased costs for food, beverage, and A/V support, and potential increased cost of sponsorship for higher tier sponsorship of limited number of



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reserved tables. The Council needs feedback from the planning committee about the policy and mechanics of managing attendees at the reserved higher tier sponsored tables. Ahmed will liaison with the planning committee and Council sponsorship committee to understand the planning committee’s policy and proposed mechanics of managing higher tier tables and will report back to the Council. Ahmed and Mendoza to facilitate alignment and understanding across the groups.

Sarahan volunteered to work with Ahmed and Mendoza to develop a proposed path forward by the Q1 meeting that would include a registration rate increase.

**3. Update regarding 2023 Changing Face of Water Law Conference – Alia Vinson**

The dates for the conference at the Hyatt Hill Country Resort are February 23-24, 2023. Vinson reported that 2023 will be the first year for the conference to be back in person and is anticipating some pent-up demand. So far, she is not seeing a significant uptick in pricing from the hotel that would impact the registration fee. Other than the happy hour sponsorship associated with the event, the conference does not have a special sponsorship structure other than what may be set up by TexasBar CLE. Vinson and the planning committee are in the process of finalizing the speakers, and the program flyer is expected to be available after Thanksgiving.

**4. Update regarding 2023 Climate Change Symposium planning – Nathan Block**

Block reported that the 2023 Climate Change Symposium will be different than the 2022 inaugural year. The Texas Environmental Law Journal does not have the capacity to prepare a special edition to coincide with the Symposium. The planning committee has been exploring different venues in addition to the Bullock Museum. April 27 or 28 is the current event date target. The planning committee expects to lock down a date and is seeking a keynote speaker to present during a lunchtime slot. Next steps for the committee also include work to secure sponsorships.

**C. Diversity, Engagement, and Inclusion Committee – Ty’Meka Reeves-Sobers & Amber Ahmed, Co-Chairs**

**1. Update**



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Reeves-Sobers reported regarding the Council’s current mechanism for obtaining diversity background information for nominees considered by the Nomination Committee. The committee’s inquiries to other State Bar sections did not yield significant information about best practices or considerations other sections may be utilizing for obtaining information about potential nominees.

**2. Recommendations / discussion**

Discussion included the idea of developing a questionnaire form for potential nominees to complete so that the Nomination Committee has the same type of information about each potential nominee prior to interviewing. Austin and Block offered to assist the committee with developing a questionnaire and are seeking suggestions on the kind of information to include.

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

**1. Recap regarding October 26, 2022 Houston law school program**

Wahl, Block, Reeves-Sobers, Austin, and Dyar participated in a panel discussion for the Section’s Houston area law school program. The program was immensely successful. Though a relatively small number of students attended, the quality of the program and opportunities for making connections were excellent before and after the meeting. Shelton reported that the format of individual attorneys telling stories generated better feedback than topic-driven presentations.

Shelton reported that law school programs have now been provided to four of ten Texas law schools with a program at UT and the Houston event for Thurgood Marshall, South Texas College of Law, and University of Houston. The committee is scheduled to provide programs at the other schools this fall. Liaisons with the schools are working with each of the schools to set up events. Over the years, the Council has had more programs with Tech and Baylor.

**2. Potential addition of City of Dallas OEQ / City Attorney to Johnson internships**

The Council previously approved an increase in internship stipends and to redirect the internship slot from GLO beginning in the summer of 2023. McGuire met with Carlos Evans of the City of Dallas City Attorney’s Office to discuss the ENRLS internship programs and the Mickey Leland program. The City is interested in hosting an intern for Summer 2023 in the Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability, whose work intersects that of the City Attorney’s Office.



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The Council discussed general considerations for internship participation that might apply to governmental agencies and offices that seek to partner with the Section, including minimum duration commitment of two years and the Council's confidence in an agency's long-term commitment to partner with the Section as that has historically been the most important aspect of adding and growing Section internships. The Council suggested Shelton review current processes and criteria for how the Section works with internship partners to identify a basic framework that could potentially apply to partner agencies.

Block moved and Fancher seconded a motion to offer the position formerly offered to GLO to the City of Dallas Office of Environmental Quality and Sustainability.

**3. Other updates**

Kelley reported that she will be sending out invitations and an announcement about internships and deadlines after the winter break for students to prepare and submit applications.

**E. Publications & Communications Committee – Ashleigh Myers & Anne Austin, Co-Chairs**

**1. Update regarding Texas Environmental Law Journal**

Myers reported that TELJ switched to a new publisher and is working through growing pains and processes. The first issue in the academic year will be a good milestone. TELJ has noticed a reduction in lead author submissions, which are needed for upcoming issues. Chancellor plans to circulate a blurb to Section social media accounts to promote the opportunity. Myers also reported that student development author spots are temporarily open. Journal membership is down this year from prior years.

**2. Update regarding continued support for Water Treatise**

Wahl reported on the Essentials of Texas Water Resources. Texas Bar Books takes the laboring oar on publishing. Wahl queried whether the Section wants to continue to sponsor the book. Block moved and Austin seconded to continue the sponsorship and reasonable reimbursement expenses, and the motion passed unanimously.

**F. Pro Bono & Community Outreach Committee – Marcella Burke**

**1. Update**



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Burke reported that the prior chairs of the Pro Bono & Community Outreach committee are no longer on the Council, which presents an opportunity for newer Council members to get involved. Wahl reported that the last few years have not been well funded due to budget adjustments that arose from impacts from Covid. Historically, the Council has contributed to nonprofit projects in line with an environmental perspective. The Council has attempted to manage the inherent tension of finding projects that it can support that do not create conflicts. Friedman volunteered to be a member of the committee. The committee will consider its objectives and propose recommendations to the Council at the Q1 meeting.

**G. Sponsorship & Membership Committee –Paul Sarahan, Chair**

**1. Update**

Sarahan thanked Palmer and Dillinger for their outstanding effort in taking the Section’s sponsorship effort to new heights with Superconference sponsorships and a successful tenure as co-chairs. He updated that the Section’s membership in 2022 of 1,297 members is an overall increase even with 248 attorneys not renewing their membership.

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

**1. Update**

Sarahan reported that the committee has continued to add input to the Section’s website, and has experienced great coordination with the Social Media Committee.

**I. Social Media Committee – Erin Chancellor, Chair**

**1. Report on Social Media Initiatives**

Chancellor reported that social media updates are going well and asked for Council members to advise her and Sarahan of events, information to share and/or recurring updates. The committee has seen a significant increase in engagement and new followers on social media.

**2. Update on discontinuation of Workhorse support / transition to alternative management for social media activities**

Chancellor reported that pursuant to a prior vote, the Section discontinued work with Workhorse related to social media updates.



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**V. OTHER / NEW BUSINESS**

**A.** 2022-2023 roster and updates to contact info and committees

Wahl reported that he would circulate a new roster and requested review and confirmation of information for Council members and committees.

**B.** 2023 meetings

Wahl reported that Wednesday, February 22, 2023, would be the date for the Council's Q1 meeting and dinner at the Hill Country Hyatt Resort prior to the Changing Face of Water Law Conference.

Block will reach out to the Houston Bar Association Environmental Law Section to evaluate timing of a potential lunch meeting in May that could coincide with the Council's Q2 meeting.

**VI. ADJOURN**

Burke moved and Block seconded to adjourn the Q4 meeting, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:11 p.m.

