

ENRLS Council Q1 Meeting Minutes – February 22, 2023 – 5:30 p.m.
In-Person Meeting at Hyatt Hill Country San Antonio and via MS Teams

I. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, & RECOGNITIONS – Pete Wahl

Wahl opened the meeting at 5:32 p.m. and proceeded with introductions and roll call:

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

Pete Wahl, Lisa Dyar, Kristen Fancher, Nathan Block, Amber Ahmed, Erin Chancellor, Ashleigh Myers, Marcella Burke, Alia Vinson, Walt Shelton, Kimberly Kelley, Adrian Shelley, Mike Dillinger, Anne Austin

B. ENRLS Council and Committee Co-Chairs Present via MS Teams:
Adam Friedman, Mary Mendoza, Paul Sarahan

C. ENRLS Council and Committee Co-Chairs Absent:
Steve McMillen, Catarina Gonzales, Ty’Meka Reeves-Sobers

II. SECRETARY’S REPORT – Lisa Dyar

A. Consider Minutes from the Q4 2022 (Oct. 26, 2022) Council Meeting

Wahl circulated draft minutes for the ENRLS Council Q4 meeting, held at the Pillsbury Houston Office and via MS Teams on February 20, 2023, 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, Block seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

III. TREASURER’S REPORT – Kristen Fancher

A. Financial Reports

Fancher reported that as of December 31, 2022, ENRLS had \$434,138 in assets, \$1,052 in liabilities, and a fund balance of \$433,097. As of December 31, 2021, ENRLS had \$377,705 in assets, \$8,855 in liabilities, and a fund balance of \$368,850. As a result, the Section is in better financial health by \$64,247 compared to the same timeframe last year. This status appears to be largely attributable to the Section’s sustained commitment to maintain financial discipline and continued increase in sponsorships for Superconference post-pandemic, with the total sponsorship amount for 2022 coming in at \$79,860.

B. Discuss Approved FY 2022-2023 Budget and Consideration of Adjustments

No update.



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C. ENRLS Invoicing Transition Update

Block provided an update in connection with the Climate Symposium, discussed below.

D. Reimbursement Form

No update.

IV. COMMITTEE UPDATES & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Nominating Committee – Nathan Block, Chair

Block reported that he is setting up the 2023 Nominations Committee and encouraged Council members to consider and recommend Section members who may be interested in serving on the Committee. The Committee should include at least one diverse member and an at-large Section member not on the Council. Block indicated that the Committee has an opportunity to increase geographic diversity statewide. He expects to have a Nominating Committee slate to propose to the Council at the Q2 meeting.

General discussion included interest in the Committee increasing diversity of geographic areas within the state such as West Texas, and inclusion of in-house counsel members to the Council.

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

1. *2023 Changing Face of Water Law Conference* – Alia Vinson

Vinson gave a positive update on the ongoing conference, noting that it was being held in-person for the first time since February 2020. At least 109 had registered, slightly lower than the pre-pandemic normal, which is consistent with trends in other Sections of the Bar.

2. *2023 Climate Change Symposium Planning* – Nathan Block

The Symposium will be held at the Bullock Museum on April 28, 2023, and will include a reception following the presentations. To break even on funding the Symposium, ~\$28,300 is needed. Through the planning committee's continued work, sponsorships may be sufficient to cover the costs. At the time of the meeting, publicity was ongoing via email and social media posts.



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Block provided an update related to the registration challenges associated with the ENRLS website and Stripe due to the mechanical nature of the process and issues with receipts. The Bar would like the Section to use WePay. Some details remain to be sorted out from a payment processing perspective, and Block expects to provide an update at a future meeting.

3. *2023 Superconference – Amber Ahmed*

Mendoza negotiated and the Bar signed a new contract with the Four Seasons. Mendoza explained that the hotel has again increased costs for food, beverage, and A/V support.

4. *Additional Discussion*

The Council continued discussion regarding the policy and mechanics of managing conference attendees at a limited number of reserved higher tier sponsored tables. Sarahan, Ahmed, and Mendoza will continue to explore alternatives for higher tier table sponsorship, including potential increased amounts of sponsorship, and will provide recommendations at the Q2 meeting.

Ahmed reported that the Superconference planning committee is considering a registration fee increase due to increased costs at the hotel. The registration fee in 2022 was \$575 for regular registrations. Ahmed recommended the fee be increased to \$650, which is still the best rate in town for a two-day conference (e.g., UT, ABA, or State Bar conferences).

The Council discussed potential considerations related to rate adjustments and/or scholarships for government, students, nonprofit, and planning committee members. Mendoza reported that the 2022 registration fee was \$125 for governmental employees, \$75 for students, and full registration fee waiver for conference speakers. Vinson confirmed that the Water Law conference registration fee in 2023 is \$745 for a two-day conference before the discount offered for Section members, and that a government rate is not offered. In some past years, the Section has offered a limited number of scholarships to nonprofit attendees based on criteria to confirm nonprofit status. Overall total sponsorships, including significant support from EarthX, affect the ability to offer scholarships and may inform rate adjustments.

Block moved to increase the Superconference standard registration rate from \$575 to \$650 and for the Committee to develop recommendations on potential rate adjustments and/or scholarships for other registration categories (e.g., government, students, nonprofit, planning committee). Vinson seconded and the motion passed unanimously.



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

No update.

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

1. *Law School Programs*

Shelton reported that the 2022-2023 academic year has seen a great turnaround to the Committee’s pre-pandemic programming. In fall 2022, the Committee’s events included five schools: South Texas, Thurgood Marshall, University of Houston, University of Texas, and North Texas. For Spring 2023, the Committee visited Baylor, set up events at Texas Tech and St. Mary’s, and is likely to hold an event with A&M. The Committee continues to outreach to SMU to encourage participation.

2. *Buck J. Wynne Memorial Scholarships*

Shelton reported that the Committee is gathering names of the outstanding students from the various schools that will receive the Buck Wynne scholarships for this academic year.

Shelton reported that Baylor made a decision to restrict the value of third-party scholarships offered to students through the university beginning in 2024. After robust discussion, Shelton recommended offering a \$2,500 scholarship at Baylor to align with the university’s requirements. Although \$2,500 is different than the amount of Buck Wynne scholarships the Section offers other Texas law schools, it would keep Baylor in the Buck Wynne program. Fancher moved to offer a Buck Wynne scholarship to one Baylor student in the amount of \$2,500, and Dillinger seconded. Block opposed the motions, and all others favored the motion. The motion passed.

3. *Professor Corwin W. Johnson Memorial Summer Internships*

Kelley reported that the Committee received applications from 20 students. The Committee expects to make and communicate decisions to selected applicants in March 2023.

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

1. *Texas Environmental Law Journal*



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Myers reported that TELJ work on the next issue is progressing. Because TELJ will not have a Climate Symposium issue this year, TELJ revenue is lower. Myers recommended, and the Council discussed, potential approaches to boosting TELJ income from publications. Block indicated that going forward the Symposium budget will include funding for a TELJ Symposium issue that could be covered by Symposium revenue or sponsorship funds. Block moved to increase the Section’s payment to TELJ by \$3,000 for the current fiscal year. Wahl seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

F. Pro Bono & Community Outreach Committee – Marcella Burke, Chair

Burke reported that she, along with Shelley, will develop alternatives to present to the Council at the Q2 meeting.

G. Sponsorship & Membership Committee – Paul Sarahan, Chair

Sarahan provided an update related to Superconference sponsorships, discussed above.

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

No update.

I. Social Media Committee – Erin Chancellor, Chair

Chancellor reported that she will be posting updates for the Water Law Conference and information related to Section scholarships and summer internships.

V. OTHER / NEW BUSINESS

A. Q2 and Q3 2023 meetings

The Q2 Council meeting will be in Houston at 12:00 p.m. on May 3, 2023 at the office of Allen Boone Humphries Robinson. The Q3 Council meeting will be in Austin on August 2, 2023 at the Jackson Walker office.

VI. ADJOURN

Block moved to adjourn the Q1 meeting, and Wahl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

