

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## Small Town and Rural Committee

**Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting | Virtual Only**

**Wednesday, March 20, 2024, | 12:10 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.**

Via [Zoom](#) | Meeting ID: 815 7000 4025 | Passcode: 684632 | Call-in: 888-788-0099

## AGENDA

1. Introductions and Approval of January Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrasek)
2. WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)
3. Subcommittee Report Updates, if any (Subcommittee chairs Laurie Powers, Gov. Petrasek, Betsy Penoyar)
4. Project Team Updates
  - a. Job Fair at Gonzaga (Laurie Powers)
  - b. Summit Project Team (Laurie Powers)
    - i. Expenses & Reimbursements (Julianne Unite)
  - c. Rural Day of Service (Kathryn Burke, Kari Petrasek)
5. Summer Internship Grant Selection Volunteers (Kari Petrasek)
6. FY25 Budget (Julianne Unite)
7. Announcements
8. Next Steps/Conclusion
9. Next Meeting: April 17, 2024
10. Adjournment

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## Small Town and Rural Committee Charter

Effective: July 16, 2021  
as approved by the  
WSBA Board of  
Governors

### ***Purpose***

The WSBA Small Town and Rural (STAR) Committee is committed to strengthen and support the practice of law in the rural communities throughout Washington state. Members of the STAR Committee will work to ensure that the practice of law in rural communities is present, growing, and thriving.

Practitioners in rural communities are few and far between. Additionally, many of these practitioners are nearing retirement without a clear plan of succession for their clients, leaving a void of access to legal representation and counsel. The STAR Committee will guide policy & program development, serves as ambassadors between the WSBA and these communities, explore and advocate for creative and innovative solutions, and regularly assess the legal landscape in rural communities to determine if WSBA policy, advocacy and program development require further resource for sustainability and improvements.

The STAR Committee aligns with the authorized activities outlined in General Rule 12. More specifically, GR 12.1 (a) articulates the Washington Supreme Court’s regulatory objective to provide, in part, “meaningful access to justice. . .” while GR 12.1(d) strives for “affordable and accessible legal services.” In addition, the STAR Committee aligns with the authorized activities outlined in GR 12.2, in particular by providing “services to members and the public,” and “fostering collegiality among its members and goodwill between the legal profession and the public.”

Further, the STAR Committee furthers the WSBA mission to serve the public and the members of the Bar by providing focused attention on the unique needs of residents and members in rural areas both by improving access to legal practitioners in rural communities and outreach and development of a pipeline of younger rural residents to pursue a legal career and serve their communities.

### ***Definition of “Rural”***

For the purpose of the STAR Committee and reflective of Washington’s unique geographic and socio-geographic landscape, the definition of “rural” is as follows:

Based on the definitions produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (ERS) and an overview of Washington county population, we focused on counties with populations of less than 50,000 and more than 2,500. These areas are considered ‘urban non-metro areas not part of larger labor markets’ by ERS. As part of the working definition, and for ease, we have termed these counties as ‘rural.’ Based upon WA county population data, we’ve pursued a hypothesis that counties with 30,000 or more as rural, but likely more

adjacent to a labor market and perhaps have a varying set of circumstances that may differ from counties that are less than 30,000.

### **Composition**

Members of the STAR Committee should have demonstrated experience and/or interest in a thriving legal practice in Washington's rural communities. The STAR Committee will consist of 13 members and are outlined as:

- Chair (voting member)
- 2 Current or Former WSBA Board of Governors Members (voting members)
- 1 Active WSBA Member At Large (voting member)
- 4 Active WSBA Members from rural communities - see above for definition of "rural" (voting members)
- 1 Active WSBA Young Lawyer Member, as defined in WSBA Bylaws (voting member)
- 3 Law School Representatives (voting members, must be currently employed with a WA Law School which is not currently represented on the Committee.)
- 1 Active WSBA Lawyer Member currently employed with a Qualified Legal Service Provider (QLSP)(voting member).

WSBA Staff Liaison: Member Services and Engagement Manager or staff member in the Advancement Department, non-voting

Board of Governor Liaison: as assigned annually, non-voting.

### **Terms**

- Chair: two-year term
- Members: three-year term

### **Initial Committee Terms**

The first appointments to the STAR Committee should effectuate a staggered rotation of STAR Committee members. Therefore, the following terms are in place for the first appointment cycle only. All subsequent terms should adhere to the term limits stated above. STAR Committee member serving an initial term less than three years, should be considered an incomplete term. Therefore, the member is eligible to serve two subsequent complete three-year terms in WSBA Bylaws.

- 2 Active WSBA Members  
*1 member with two-year term, 1 member with three-year term.*
- 4 Active WSBA Members from rural communities (see above for definition)  
*1 member with one-year term, 1 member with two years term, 2 members with three-years term.*
- 3 Law School Representatives (voting, must be currently employed with a WA Law School)
- *1 member with one-year term, 1 member with two-years term, 1 member with three-years term.*

The following positions will begin as a standard term as set forth in this charter.

- Chair
- 1 Active WSBA Young Lawyer Member

- 1 Active WSBA Lawyer Member currently employed with a Qualified Legal Service Provider (QLSP).

### ***Scope of Work***

The scope of the STAR Committee's work will focus on what the WSBA is uniquely positioned to do in supporting a sustaining and thriving environment for the practice of law in Washington's rural communities. The STAR Committee will work with all relevant and interested stakeholders to collaborate where needed. The provision of direct legal services and civil legal aid to the public is outside the scope of the STAR Committee.

### ***Measures of Success***

- Increased awareness of the issues and possible solutions to address any gap in practicing members in rural communities.
- A sustainable pipeline of legal practitioners in rural communities.
- Increased numbers of legal practitioners in rural communities.
- The establishment of funding for programs and initiatives for the practice of law in rural communities.

### ***STAR Committee Roles***

#### **1. Community Education and Outreach**

Coordinated efforts to educate members and potential members about the unique needs, opportunities and benefits of a rural practice. This can include, but should not be limited to, comprehensive information on WSBA's website, features in WSBA publications, presentations at high schools, law schools and community colleges. Meetings and events, such as a summit or symposium, to highlight the issue, convene interested stakeholders to share their concerns and strategize on possible solutions.

#### **2. Pipeline and Placement Program(s)**

Develop WSBA programming, or WSBA supported/partnered programming designed to build a pipeline of practitioners in rural areas as well as an incentive program to encourage members to explore a rural practice on a time-limited or multi-year timeframe. This role should explore a possible collaboration or strategic overlap with WSBA existing and future mentorship program(s). In particular, this role will require extensive strategic planning and identification of external stakeholder support and additional funding sources. Coordinate with law schools and other stakeholders regarding economic incentives to practice in rural areas.

#### **3. Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse**

Utilize existing and future WSBA resources to support and highlight job opportunities in rural communities. This role should include making it easier, and perhaps more cost-effective, to add job postings to WSBA's service. Develop a clearing house to assist retiring members with succession planning and the buying/selling of a practice.

### ***Committee Evaluation***

The STAR Committee should conduct an assessment within five years from the date of Board of Governors' approval by 1) conducting a survey of rural practitioners to provide stakeholder feedback regarding the impact of this Committee to effectuate change in these areas, 2) assessing the scope of work to reflect impact and progress in this area and align with trends in the greater legal community, and 3) earnestly examining if the Committee is necessary to continue the scope of work.

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## Small Town and Rural Committee

### Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, February 21, 2024 | 12:13 p.m. – 1:21 p.m. *Virtual meeting via Zoom*

**Committee Members Present:** Allison Foreman, Ashley Rae Cummins, Elizabeth Penoyar, Erin Lloyd, Jesse Lamp, Governor Kari Petrasek, Laurie Powers, Merf Ehman, Rusty McGuire

**Committee Members Absent:** Hunter Abell (unexcused), Sunitha Anjilvel (excused), Zachary Bryant (excused), Judge Kathryn Burke (excused)

**WSBA Staff Present:** Julianne Unite, Kevin Plachy, Curtiss Melvin, Rachel Matz

**WSBA Board of Governors Liaisons Present:** Matthew Dresden

**Public Attendees Present:** Sophia Byrd McSherry, Sara Cuellar, Marques Lang

## Introductions and Approval of January Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrasek)

Governor Kari Petrasek called the meeting to order at 12:13 p.m. Governor Petrasek invited those in attendance for the first time to provide introductions. First-time attendees included Marques Lang. On motion by Committee Member Rusty McGuire, seconded by Committee Member Merf Ehman, by unanimous vote (9-0-0) the committee approved the January meeting minutes.

## WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)

Governor Petrasek provided updates on the next Board of Governors (BOG) meeting, which will be held on March 7-8, 2024, at Gonzaga University. There will be social events, including the Local Heroes Lunch on Thursday. Governor Petrasek also mentioned that the WSBA is having the District Governor elections for District 7 South seat and is accepting applications for the President-Elect position, with a deadline of April 9, 2024. WSBA Member Services and Engagement Manager, Julianne Unite, advised that the WSBA is accepting applications for District 1 seat with the same deadline of April 9. The WSBA is also accepting applications for BOG At-Large Young Lawyer Position and the deadline is April 15. Julianne stated District 7 South members should expect to receive ballots in their inbox on March 15. Julianne advised that WSBA is seeking nominations for the APEX awards, which recognize legal luminaries in the profession. The deadline to nominate is the end of February. The WSBA is having its CLE winter sale and offering 50% off on selected on-demand seminars at the WSBA CLE store. The sale takes place from February 13 – March 5 and includes recorded CLEs that can be watched at any time. Julianne stated the STAR Committee is participating in the WSBA Community Pilot Project. If members haven't created their profiles, we highly encourage you to create one at your earliest convenience and engage in some of the threads. The WSBA Community pilot is scheduled to end in May. It would be helpful if members participated so WSBA can determine if it's a tool the bar wants to keep. The WSBA will be soliciting feedback from pilot participants on what are the challenges and/or benefits.

## Subcommittee Report Updates, if any (Subcommittee chairs Laurie Powers, Gov. Petrasek, Betsy Penoyar)

None.

## Project Team Updates

### a) Job Fair at Gonzaga (Laurie Powers)

STAR Committee Member, Laurie Powers, said everything is up and has launched. She has 24 employers who have signed up so far to conduct interviews and 22 have signed up for the afternoon info session. Laurie advised that she wants employers registered by March 1, 2024, they have a good mix of law firms, non-profits, and city organizations. The open positions are postgraduate positions except for two law student internships. So far there are only six job seekers who have signed up. Laurie commented she is sending announcements to Northwest Consortium Law School and NAAP Solo & Small Career Offices for schools in smaller communities across the country. Laurie stated she is looking for WSBA's assistance to market to job seekers and employers. WSBA Advancement Director, Kevin Plachy, stated the WSBA sent communications to all the rural practitioners. Kevin advised that WSBA plans on posting in the next Take Note but will need to check when it's supposed to go out. Kevin asked Laurie if she received a boost from the last Take Note announcement, and she said yes. Laurie said she received a request from a local Spokane Attorney General's Office (AGO) to participate, according to the rules employers are supposed to be 40 miles outside of Spokane. The attorney from Spokane said they have attorneys who practice outside of Spokane. Laurie thought it may be okay to have them included if they are seeking to fill positions for lawyers in their Pullman or Yakima offices. STAR Committee members generally did not believe the Spokane AGO should be eligible to participate at this time if the positions were in Spokane.

### b) Summit Project Team (Laurie Powers)

Laurie commented that there will be a reception on Thursday, and thanked Rusty for his foundation's sponsorship donation. Laurie spoke with a representative from Umpqua Bank and they are interested in being a sponsor. She also wanted to invite attendees from the Real Property, Probate, and Trust (RPPT) Section to the reception, who will be there for their Midyear. Kevin said he would reach out to RPPT to invite them, and WSBA staff will assist with registration. Laurie requested Judge Rodriguez True from Yakima to be a keynote speaker, but is waiting on confirmation. The project group is considering the Legal Foundation of Washington (LFW) or Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA) to facilitate the second panel. Dolly Hunt, Past Prosecutor President, and Lloyd Jefferson from the Office of Public Defense (OPD) have agreed to speak. Laurie asked Rusty if he would speak on the panel, and he agreed. The Committee will need someone to volunteer to draft conversation starter questions. Laurie said Merf would lead the section "Brainstorming for Solutions". There will be two questions for their breakout rooms and have people come back and share. Laurie will need members from the STAR Committee to facilitate the breakout rooms. She is also looking into having survey questions via live polling, and if anyone is familiar with that technology please let her know. Judge Mendoza is going to be the keynote speaker, there will be two breakout sessions 1:00 pm - 2:15 pm and 2:30 pm - 3:45

pm. Laurie is looking for someone on the STAR Committee to take the lead in recruiting speakers, and the topics would be “Attracting Lawyers to Rule Practice: How to Find Them and Keep Them”, and “Effectively Addressing LGBTQIA Disability Immigration Status” and “Racial Bias In Rural Communities”. Professor Zaida Rivera is willing to assist with the recruitment. The afternoon sessions will be “Effectively Onboarding and Supervising Legal Interns”, “New Attorneys in a Rural Practice”, and “Myths and Stereotypes About a Rural Practice”, they are looking for someone to take the lead on the recruitment of speakers.

Kevin stated that time is critical because he needs to get the summit registration posted to the store 10 weeks before to get good results. He would need to know the presentation’s topics and who’s going to be speaking. Merf said they are willing to take on the assignment however will need someone to help. STAR Committee Member, Ashley Cummins, volunteered to help Merf. STAR Committee Member, Erin Lloyd, said she would volunteer to help with whatever is needed but will need help with speakers and panelists because she doesn’t have much knowledge of rural practitioners in the area, however, she would be willing to take on either task. Governor Petrusek would be willing to do the introductions. Erin said she is willing to reach out to people, but it would be helpful if someone could provide her with the contact information. Erin volunteered to take the lead on “Effectively Onboarding and Supervising Legal Interns” and “New Attorneys in a Rural Practice”. Laurie said some law school people could assist with “Attracting Lawyers to Rule Practice: How to Find Them and Keep Them”, or others who had success in that area. Laurie requested assistance with, “Myths and Stereotypes About a Rural Practice”, she has names of people who could help but need someone willing to contact them.

STAR Committee Member, Jesse Lamp, would be willing to help with side projects but can’t commit to lead. Merf asked if Kevin needed help with sponsorships. Kevin said he is looking for people with connections to law firms for sponsorships and he would contact them. Jesse said to talk with, WSBA President, Hunter Abell, about possible sponsorship. Kevin said if Laurie provided him with the contact from Umpqua Bank he would reach out. Kevin asked if anyone knew of a law firm willing to sponsor, he would contact them so they could be included in the marketing materials. Governor Petrusek said Solo and Small Practice (SSP) has agreed to be a sponsor. Jesse suggested reaching out to Hunter because he has lots of connections in rural areas. Governor Petrusek said she would reach out to Hunter. Laurie asked if anyone would like to volunteer to take the lead on “Attracting Lawyers to Rule Practice: How to Find Them and Keep Them” and “Myths and Stereotypes About a Rural Practice”. Governor Petrusek said she could help with “Attracting Lawyers to Rule Practice: How to Find Them and Keep Them”. Merf said they could do “Myths and Stereotypes About a Rural Practice” if someone was willing to help. Sophia posted in chat she would help Merf. Erin is going to poll her team, recent grads who are doing rural work that could be a good fit for “Myths and Stereotypes About a Rural Practice” and would forward their names. The Committee decided to charge \$30 for registration. Laurie said there was a name created for the summit, “Inaugural Small Town and Rural Practice Summit.” If someone would like to suggest a better title, she is open to change. Laurie’s target date to open registration is the week of March 7-15, and have the agenda finalized by April 7. Merf said law students are free. Erin asked if panelists needed to pay for the event. Governor Petrusek said no, and STAR Committee members volunteering will also be free. Laurie asked who is responsible for paying for the speaker’s flight, lodging, etc. Kevin said the committee must



follow WSBA fiscal policy, which states that WSBA will reimburse volunteers for expenses associated with volunteering, including travel expenses and meals. Governor Petrasek stated the group could discuss STAR Committee members' reimbursements at their next meeting.

#### c) July Legal Lunchbox (Ashley Cummins, Rachel Matz)

Ashley said the Legal Lunchbox will take place Tuesday, July 25 from 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. and the topic selected was "Farmer Worker Rights". There is two directions being considered. First, issues for spotting farmers' growth rights and issues within private practice. The team is looking at the overlap; citizenship, voting rights, housing, labor law, and family law. Or explore a potential new law, case, or legislation, that will have a significant impact. The goal is to have two speakers, one representing a nonprofit and public interest from the attorney perspective, and another from private practice. Education Programs Lead, Rachel Matz said it depends on the topic. If it's new legislation you could potentially incorporate both perspectives, it depends on the direction chosen. Jesse said you should get both perspectives. Merf said someone from the AG office got a huge settlement. Alfredo Gonzalez worked on that case and could be a potential candidate. Merf suggested Deanna Garcia, from the Kenwick office, as a potential candidate for someone with farmer rights experience. Rachel asked for someone to be the moderator. Kevin said it should be someone from this committee because they can introduce the speaker on behalf of the committee. Jesse said he is willing to help however doesn't want to commit to being a moderator, but that could change later.

#### d) Rural Day of Service (Judge Kathryn Burke, Gov. Petrasek)

None

#### e) Loan Repayment Assistance (Gov. Petrasek, Julianne Unite) Please look at: [LRAP – Ohio Access to Justice Foundation \(ohiojusticefoundation.org\)](http://ohiojusticefoundation.org)

Governor Petrasek and Julianne met with the Ohio Access to Justice Foundation (OAJF). The OAJF started a loan repayment assistance program (LRAP) in 2007, where attorney participants could receive up to \$6000 a year if they are involved in public defense and/or legal aid work in rural areas. The amount paid is based on their monthly student loan payment. Verification is required if applicants are using the funds for repayment of student loans. The student loans are tax-free. The applicant will get a 1099 if they default. The program is funded through IOLTA and filing fees. Julianne advised the Ohio model is probably not how WSBA should set up an LRAP; however, there is a consultant named Heather Jarvis who helps other organizations, schools, and associations set up their LRAP.

Governor Petrasek asked if the committee should create a project team, perhaps after June 7. Merf said to wait until after the summit, they don't have the capacity currently. Kevin said WSBA have funding in the budget for an internship placement. The team overseeing this will need to come up with the processes, procedures, and timing if the project team is going to do it. It will need to be reviewed internally by WSBA since it's the bar funds. The budget cycle is over in September so the funds allocated would need to be spent by the end of September. Governor

Petrasek said she thought it was Erin or Laurie who signed up for doing a webinar on internships. Erin said the webinar was geared toward best practices for taking on interns. Kevin wanted to know if anyone was interested because the proposal procedures need to get started, e.g., the application process and selecting applicants. The process needs to be documented and figured out. Kevin said he would help with the development of the process. Kevin said WSBA has \$45,000 in the budget for the internship project, but there needs to be a framework and procedures established to allocate the funds. Kevin suggested if the group wants to start working on the procedures now, even if it's not completed by this year, it can carry over to next year. It would help present for next year's budget. Laurie advised get a meeting scheduled and include Kevin to discuss the funds the bar has available for internships. Governor Petrasek said she would work on the proposal also. Governor Petrasek asked Erin and Laurie when they wanted to schedule a webinar on "Why You Should Have an Intern and Best Practices", sometime in April or May. Kevin recommended if doing an internship program this year, develop an on-demand webinar that can be used anytime during the year and make it accredited.

Sophia McSherry (OPD), said if [Bill 5780](#) passes, OPD would develop their own internship program for public defense and would want to coordinate with WSBA on outreach to the different schools. Governor Petrasek advised letting OPD do the heavy lifting and her group could provide funds for civil practice internships. Sophia advised that [Bill 5780](#) has passed the Senate but is in the House. The bill is looking like it's ready for the next step. Julianne posted the bill in the chat. Senator Torres introduced the bill in Franklin County. The primary concern is losing public defenders and not being able to recruit more. In the bill's current form, it's setting up two functions; recruiting interns in rural counties, the other focusing on training for public defenders and prosecutors. Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (WAPA) and the Criminal Justice Training Commission would do it for prosecutors, and OPD would do it for public defenders. The members may want to share about the bill at the job fair on April 5. If the bill passes OPD would be able to fund 12 legal interns, qualified Rule 9 students in law school, or a recent graduate paired with a world practitioner in a public defender agency, or an attorney in a small firm to do public defense work. OPD would pay \$28/hr., \$900/month housing stipend and reimbursement for the attorney on site providing supervision, as well on the prosecution side.

## Announcements

None.

## Next Steps/Conclusion

None.

**Next Meeting: March 20, 2024**

## Adjournment

Governor Petrasek adjourned the meeting at 1:21 p.m.