



MIAMI DADE BAR

123 NORTHWEST FIRST AVENUE

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09/21/2021

MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, September 21, 2021
5:00 P.M. – via Zoom
DADE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

OFFICERS/DIRECTORS PRESENT:

Sabrina Puglisi, President
Roger Slade, President-Elect
Suzette Russomanno, Vice President
Charise Morgan-Joseph, Secretary
Jane Muir, Immediate Past President
Jeremy Rosner
Christopher Lomax
Jeremy Rosner
Leonard Elias
Richard Leslie
Karen Ladis
Eric Kay
Marva Wiley
Katie Phang
Melissa Jordon
Karen Parker
Amber Kornreich

Marc Pugliese
Stuart Weissman, Treasurer
Evelina Libhen
Anthony Perez
Flora Seff
Tammi Calarco
Richard Shane
Albert Li
August Perera
Lori Sochin
Belinda Bacon
Michael Davis
Zachariah Evangelista
Jacqueline Arango
Adam Finkel
Jaime Vining

ALSO PRESENT:

Bret Berlin, MDB Executive Director
Scot Merl, YLS President
Tiffany-Ashley Disney, YLS President-Elect
Cristina Mas, MDB Marketing and Membership Director

AFFILIATED BAR REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

APABA -- Vincent Chen
Gwen S. Cherry -- Michelle Prescott
CABA -- Jordi C. Martinez-Cid
HLA -- Emmanuella Petion

MDFAWL -- Jessica Saiontz
Wilkie D. Ferguson -- Akivia Bassaragh
SMKBA -- Zachariah Evangelista
FACDL -- Michael Davis

AGENDA:

1. Welcome Remarks, Ms. Puglisi

- a. President Puglisi began the meeting, welcomed everyone, and called the meeting to order. The board members and representatives in attendance introduced themselves, their area of practice, and their respective positions on the board.
2. Consent Agenda Items
 - a. Board Meeting Minutes for August 2021
 - i. Marva moved; Suzette seconded to approve. The same was approved and passed by the board.
 - ii. Director Tammi Calarco asked about the board survey to move the meeting to 5:30p and was advised by Sabrina that the board had voted and agreed on 5pm on the third Tuesday for the meeting.
 - b. August New Member Report
 - i. Bret displayed the new member report as of September 21, 2021
 - ii. 2053 members to date, including 1375 regular members, 41 judiciary, 12 paralegal, 99 newly admitted members
 - iii. Jane moved; Tammi seconded to accept the new member report. The same was approved and passed by the board.
 - iv. Scot Merl asked whether there was a breakdown of the members regarding new members for YLS.
 - v. Suzette asked whether the additional breakdown could be provided according to the MDB bylaws. Bret expressed concern that unless the young lawyer/new admission information was provided, it would be cumbersome to look up the information for each new member. Sabrina suggested adding an option for new members to include their year admitted and/or age. Bret stated that he would look into adding a feature for next month.
3. Young Lawyers Section Report, Mr. Merl
 - a. Scott provided an oral report stating that YLS planned to do a service event with Lotus event in October in conjunction with the FL Bar YLD community service push for the month.
 - b. YLS Budget Proposal – YLS has circulated the budget and asked for approval so that YLS could begin planning its events for the year.
 - i. The YLS budget was shown, and Sabrina stated that the executive committee had already reviewed the budget and was recommending that the budget be approved by the board.
 - ii. Scott went over the budget, focusing on YLS signature events such as Miami Nights (likely in February), reigniting the judicial reception, and explaining that the valet charge from July's retreat was comped. He also explained that the Zoom subscription account charge shown was going to remain so that YLS could host their own events without conflict with the main bar. The YLS total expenses from the month of August were \$5,718.74.
 - iii. Suzette motioned and Jane seconded to accept the YLS budget. The same was approved and passed by the board.
4. Legal Aid & Office of Public Service Report, *Ms. Ladis*
 - a. Dade Legal Aid Report
 - i. Just completed annual recruitment and recruited 200+ pro bono attorneys to the Put Something Back roster. Karen announced that the organization has provided assistance for than 1000 people in the short summer months. She also thanked the voluntary bar associations that support the organization.
 - b. Put Something Back Reporting Form
 - c. Patently Impossible – Speeding Lawfully event – October 17, 2021
 - i. Jaime Vining spoke about the spin and cycling challenge where members could ride together spin bikes (stationary and outdoor) to support Dade Legal Aid. There are already more than \$10K in sponsors for the event!
 - d. A View from the Bench – Family Law Seminar - November 5, 2021

- e. Wheels on Meals for Veterans event will be held on Veterans' Day
- f. Jane Muir announced that Karen Ladis was the receipt of the Johnnie Ridgely award, which is given to Bar Association members who have shown an exemplary commitment to bettering the legal profession and serving their community.

She will be honored on October 15 live at the luncheon.

5. Affiliated Bar Reports

- a. APABA – Vincent Chen announced that a new scholarship in honor of Judge Meenu Sasser was created
- b. GSCBWL – Michelle Prescott announced that the organization's membership meeting was tomorrow night, and that they would announce the recipient of the membership award
- c. MDAFWL – Jessica Saiontz announced the continuation of their Blueprint series, the next installation being held tomorrow, September 22, as well as a joint event with Miami-Dade Bar
- d. SMKBA – Zachariah announced that a Professionalism vs. Ethics event was being held tomorrow, September 22.
- e. CABA – Jordi Martinez-Cid announced that several law student scholarships were recently given out, and that a pro bono event was being held this month.
- f. FACDL – [Passed]
- g. HLA – Emmanuella Petion announced that the organization was hosting a relief effort cocktail event tomorrow night and working on additional activist items to advocate on behalf of the Del Rio, Texas migrants, including sending a delegation of attorneys to the border.
- h. Wilkie D. Ferguson Jr. Bar Association – Akivia B. announced that four scholarships had been awarded, as well as an upcoming general body meeting where FMU dean, Dr. Hobbs, would be speaking on encouraging college students to apply for law school.

Bret Berlin thanked the affiliated VBAs for their reports and asked that they send their events in advance to be promoted and attended by MDB members.

6. Committee Reports – Sabrina explained that although we would not go through each committee report individually every month, the agenda would provide the reports for all board members to have and review, and to attend or coordinate events.

- a. Ad Hoc Champlain Towers, Marc Pugliese
- b. ADR/Arbitration Committee, David Friedland
- c. Bankruptcy Committee, Barry Turner, Jonathan Feldman, Patricia Redmond
- d. Building Committee, Jane Muir
 - i. Jane was happy to report that we have a firm commitment letter to conclude the loan according the previously reported terms! The executive committee had already reviewed and approved the letter. Bret added that we had previously ordered an appraisal and were ordering an environmental report and study.
 - ii. At Sabrina's request, Jane walked through the next steps, including the bank's lawyer presenting a contract, which would be reviewed by our attorney, Russell Jacobs.
- e. Civil Litigation Committee, Aaron Resnick, Joshua Spector
- f. Communication Committee, Jeanmarie Ferrara
- g. Community Service Committee, Jackie Arango, Belinda Bacon
- h. County Courts Committee, Leonard Elias
- i. Criminal Courts Committee, Dianne Caramas
- j. Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Julian Jackson Fannin & Jordanna Ishmael
- k. Environmental Law and Land Use Committee, GaruyHeld & Laura Wendell
- l. Family Courts Committee, Marck Joseph & Amber Kornreich
- m. Federal Courts Committee, Katie Phang
- n. Foreclosure Committee, Bruce Jacobs
- o. Government Relations Committee, Vicky Mendez
- p. Intellectual Property Committee, John Eagan & Jaimie Vining
- q. Juvenile Committee, Aaron Fuerer

- r. Law and Technology Committee, Eric Boos & Kelly Melchiondo
 - s. Membership- Suzette Russomanno/Cristina Mas
 - i. Suzette reported that the membership had its first meeting earlier this month. Although no one attended, Suzette and Cristina brainstormed on how to increase membership, including a previously successful promotion by Suzette for members to bring a non-member to a November event. Suzette also announced that a survey would be sent to members who have not renewed, asking for their opinions on why they had not and what could be done differently. Finally, Suzette thanked Chris Lomax for proposing an idea of board members creating videos of old school R&B songs, seducing former members to rejoin.
 - t. Marketing/Rebranding- Logo/website, Cristina Mas
 - i. Cristina reported on the new Zoom background and logo, and the plans for the upcoming installation. She also talked about larger plans, post-installation, that would be put into place to promote membership.
 - ii. Sabrina thanked Cristina Mas for the promotions for the upcoming installation, stating that the same were the best to date!
 - u. Personal Injury Committee, Michael Levine & Adam Finkel
 - v. Professionalism Committee, Russel Jacobs
 - w. Real Property Committee, Jonathan Newberg
 - x. Solo & Small Firm Committee, Paula Black & Tammi Calarco
 - y. Worker's Compensation Committee, Mark Edwards
7. Treasurer's Report, Mr. Weissman
- a. Weekly Account Balances
 - i. Stu announced that he would go over monthly account balances at each meeting, but would also be available to provide any additional, more detailed information as requested.
 - ii. Stu congratulated Sabrina and Bret on the installation sponsorship dollars raised to date. He expected that the numbers would continue to increase as we got closer to the installation.
 - iii. Building expenses were proceeding as expected and Stu would provide additional information as obtained.
 - iv. Stu further encouraged board members to continue to look for sponsorship opportunities that would make money for the board.
 - b. Cash Position Report
 - i. Total of all accounts: \$548,258.
 - ii. Weekly balances as of 9/17/2021
 - 1. DCBA Iberia Operating Account: 85,124
 - 2. LRS Iberia Operating Account: 69,034
 - 3. Iberia MMA Account: 10,966
 - 4. Wells Fargo Platinum Savings Account: 255,518
 - 5. YLS Operating Account: 127,616
 - c. MDB August Monthly Report
 - d. LRS August Monthly Report
 - e. Retreat Financial Report
 - i. The Board's July Retreat came in under the \$10K budget, landing at \$9942.43.
- Jane Muir asked how the Board's financial report compared to this time last year. Bret advised that the August report was linked under 7(c) in the attached agenda and directed where it could be found. Bret also showed a new financial report for LRS, which is now an independent business. The total revenue as of August 2021 is \$16, 210.77. There was also a \$5K license fee which was paid. We also paid a bonus to Marlon Diaz, LRS employee, of \$450.00. The LRS retained earnings to date are \$2787.74. Sabrina celebrated that LRS has always been a large contributor to the Bar, and that would continue to be in the future.

8. Secretary's Report, *Ms. Morgan-Joseph*
 - a. Charise announced no report
9. Vice President's Report, *Ms. Russomanno*
 - a. Suzette announced no report
10. President-Elect's Report, *Mr. Slade*
 - a. Roger reported on "Approach the Bench" but stated that buy-in from members has been slow to date. Roger asked for assistance from board members to recruit judges and submit questions.
 - i. Adam Finkel, Marc Pugliese, Jessica Saiontz volunteered to assist. Tiffany Disney offered to pitch to the YLS board for help.
 Sabrina made an additional pitch to committee chairs to provide questions for the Approach the Bench series. Chief Judge Sayfie will be the first interviewee, with Sabrina interviewing.
11. President's Report, *Ms. Puglisi*
 - a. Installation
 - i. Sabrina announced the highly anticipated installation next Friday. She encouraged everyone to buy their tickets this week since the final number was due to the hotel on Monday. So far, 250 people have RSVP'd, and sponsorship dollars are at \$65K so far. Judges have also increased in registration since their admission is free as a paid member. Guests have been asked to present their vaccination status, and the event will be socially distanced. Sabrina also announced the names of the award recipients who would be recognized.
 - b. Committee Performance
 - i. Sabrina acknowledged that the overwhelming majority of committees had met and proposed upcoming events, and that the community bar calendar was up to date. Sabrina asked that committee chairs follow through with the proposed ideas and that chairs ask for help where needed.
 - c. Upcoming Events
 - i. September 24, 2021: Community Service Event – Bar community service event in Doral this Friday, working with the Little Lighthouse Foundation at GEM Global Empowerment to create survival kits.
 - ii. October 1, 2021: Installation
 - iii. October 15, 2021: General Membership Luncheon
 - iv. Wellness Wednesdays: Equinox
 1. Sabrina announced the Bar's excitement behind the new Wellness Wednesday push, and asked that members attend the free classes provided by Equinox for the Bar on Wednesday.
 2. The sports event previously scheduled for September 22 was postponed until October.
 - v. Additional event items:
 - Evelina Libhen asked when goat yoga was being held. Sabrina responded that the date was October 23 and encouraged everyone to come out and enjoy the goats!
 - Tammi Calarco announced that the Solo/Small Firm Committee is having a happy hour on Oct. 13 from 5-7 pm Joint Networking with the Coral Gables Bar Association at Fritz & Franz Bierhaus.
12. Executive Director's Report, *Mr. Berlin*

Bret encouraged everyone to use the MDB event calendar and asked that everyone provide their upcoming dates.

 - a. Events Manager
 - i. MDB is currently interviewing and seeking an events manager, looking to hire soon.
 - b. Building Condition
 - i. Bret explained that the current building A/C was unsuitable to host meetings, and that MDB was looking for alternative venues at which to host.
 - c. Circle of Excellence

- i. Bret announced that Eric Hockman had stepped down from chair of this committee and that Steve Davis had stepped up to lead the program. Steve Davis would be reaching out for nominations in the upcoming weeks.
 - d. Membership Letters
 - i. Bret thanked Roger Slade for his initiative to send personal letters to non-member lawyers to join the MDB, and his submission of more than 200 names! Bret asked for a list of 10-15 lawyers from each board member to help us increase membership, and that each board member contribute their signature.
 - ii. Jane Muir asked whether there was an excel spreadsheet of non-member lawyers, but Bret expressed concern that the number of non-member lawyers was in excess of 17K. Bret assured that we could submit as many names of persons as each member have, and that we would organize the information.
 - iii. Tammi Calarco asked whether an on-site sign up could be made available for the event on October 13 for the Solo/Small Firm, which Bret assured could be done.
 - iv. Suzette asked for a list of all former MDB members ever and asked that a QR code was created to make membership sign up quicker and easier.
 - e. Annual Sponsorships
 - i. Bret recognized Melissa Jordon for introducing a new firm, which has come in as a \$6K annual sponsor!
 - ii. Bret encouraged members to do exactly this, sending an introductory email and that he would handle all further follow-up.
- 13. New Business
 - a. Appointment of Board Member to Greater Miami Dade Legal Services
 - i. Stephen Rosenthal – Sabrina announced that the term of the seat currently held by Mr. Rosenthal was up, but that Legal Services requested Mr. Rosenthal stay on the board because he was doing well. Sabrina stated that in years past, the board had followed the recommendation of Legal Services.
 - ii. Jane Muir moved that the board approve Mr. Rosenthal remaining, and Evelina Libhen seconded. The same was approved and passed by the board.
 - b. JNC Nominations
 - i. Sabrina announced that the JNC was seeking nominations of attorneys to serve on the JNC.
 - ii. Tammi Calarco expressed an interest in being considered and was directed by Sabrina to complete and submit the application.
 - c. Rule Comment
 - i. Rule 2.530
 - 1. Sabrina was approached from the Law & Technology committee regarding a proposed rule change that in certain circumstances, with the agreement of all parties, that any status hearings could be held via Zoom. The committee has requested that the MDB send a letter to the Florida Supreme Court on the rule change. Sabrina stated that it is important for us to remain politically neutral and avoid appearing to take a side that may affect any of our members. Sabrina stated that this proposed rule change seemed to benefit all attorneys and non-attorney litigants who may have increased access to justice by having the option to attend via Zoom.
 - 2. Anthony Perez is on the committee and provided further clarification that if the hearing is less than 30 minutes and non-evidentiary, the judge is required to grant the same. He also stated that the rule did not appear controversial or biased against any group.
 - ii. Proposed Comment
 - 1. Sabrina asked the board for a motion to review the proposed amendment and allow MDB to issue a proposed comment in support of the new rule.
 - 2. Jane Muir so moved, and Tammi Calarco seconded. The same was approved and passed by the board.

14. Old Business

a. Celeste Muir Award

- i. Sabrina recounted the creation of the Celeste Muir award, named for recently retired judge and the first female YLS president, and which was proposed by immediate past president, Jane Muir. Sabrina reminded the board that the award had already been voted on to be created, but now needed a vote on how the award would be funded and recipient selected.
- ii. Before excusing herself from the meeting to allow free discussion, Jane Muir explained that the David Dyer professionalism award is currently the most prestigious Miami-Dade Bar award—which was established under President Joe Serota and reflects the integrity, humility, compassion, and professionalism of the jurist—and that the new Celeste Muir award would be to recognize judges who are professional, nice, and respectful.
- iii. Unlike our endowed awards which are paid for by the families of the named judges, Jane would prefer to direct her fundraising efforts to projects such as the building and asked the board to treat this award like the Dyer award that does not require an endowment.
- iv. Board discussion followed; some of the items and positions raised included: verifying that this award had actually been voted on by the board; whether the award should be an endowed award, funded by and selections made by the family; that the creation of the award so soon after Jane's presidency could appear to be nepotistic or improper; and whether the award was suggested by a committee or by Jane Muir herself. Bret added that depending on the cost of the award, the requested endowment could be done for as little as \$3K for a \$100 award. Karen Ladis provided background information regarding the creation of other MDB awards, specifically the Schwartz, Shevin, and Goderich awards.
- v. Amber Kornreich moved for the creation of the award as a regular Bar award, Tammi Calarco seconded. Following lengthy discussion, Leonard Elias moved to table the discussion and asked that the MDB establish criteria for how the award is created and funded. The board agreed to table discussion for the next meeting.

15. Adjournment at 7:23PM