

## **MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 13, 2003 MEETING OF THE WOMEN AND THE LAW SECTION COUNCIL OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS IN AUSTIN**

### **Call to Order/ Announcements**

Judy L. Ney, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m., welcomed those attending, and determined that a quorum was present. A list of members attending in person and by telephone is attached, along with a list of those whose absence was excused.

Teresa Oxford moved, with a second by Suzanne Duvall that the following members, who contacted the Chair prior to the meeting with an explanation of their absence, be excused for good cause: Mara Blatt, Lisa Hernandez, Misty Ventura, Ronnie E. G. Harrison, and Linda Butter. The motion passed.

Kristie Brasfield announced that the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference – Texas Minority Counsel Program will be in Dallas on September 25-26, 2003. She said that Anne C. Weisberg of New York will be speaking on issues affecting women's career advancement.

Ney announced the following:

- that she will send Ventura a plaque for her service as the Section's Chair during the 2002-2003 year;
- that Ventura's baby girl, Ava Lucile Garderet, was born on June 12, 2003, the date of the Section's Annual Meeting;
- that the New Mexico State Bar sent the Section its latest journal, which features women's issues;
- that Carmen Samaniego is one of 40 women invited to Washington D. C. by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to discuss issues effecting women in probate and estate planning;
- that anyone on the council wanting to participate on the Council of Chairs' four task forces (technology, membership, e-filing, and service enhancement), or on the project to help law students, should contact her; and
- that council members should check the Section's roster containing their address and phone, and should let her know of any changes now and throughout the year.

### **Secretary's Report**

Duvall moved, with a second by Samaniego, to approve the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Section in Houston on June 12, 2003. The motion passed.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Ney said that as of July 31, 2003, the Section had \$1999.55. She stated that she did not believe that the amount reflected dues from members for this State Bar year. Rustay said that she had asked all firms who agreed to donate funds to the Section for its annual meeting in Houston to send those funds to the Hernandez, treasurer; however, she did not

know if those funds were reflected in the treasurer's report. Ney stated that she would contact Hernandez about the dues and the donations.

Avo Butler moved, with a second from Oxford, to table further discussion of the treasurer's report until the Section had more information from the treasurer. The motion passed.

### **Proposed Policies**

Deborah Ingraham left the room, at Ney's request, while the council discussed emeritus status on the council. Ney suggested that the council consider, at a later time, the possibility of amending its by-law to permit all former presidents and chairs of the Section to become emeritus members of the council, without voting privileges. She said that their knowledge and experience would be valuable to the Section and that the current by-laws allow the council to appoint distinguished members of the Section to be emeritus voting members of the council.

Carolyn F. Moore moved, with a second from Butler, that Ingraham be appointed emeritus voting member of the council until the next annual meeting. The motion passed.

Ingraham returned to the meeting room and graciously accepted the appointment.

### **Newsletter**

Lisa Smith asked to have information for the newsletter by Friday, September 19, 2003. She needs a report from the chair and a few lines of information from council members about local women's bar associations for the Around the State Column.

After much discussion on whether to continue having the newsletter sent to members in paper form or by e-mail, the Council decided that the Section's next newsletter, which should reach members within six (6) weeks, would be sent in paper form. It will have a sentence or two explaining that the Council is exploring with the State Bar the feasibility of sending the newsletter by e-mail to those who prefer e-mail and by paper to those who prefer hard copy.

Smith agreed to contact staff at the State Bar to find out if the Bar can arrange to have the newsletters sent by e-mail, and to determine the cost savings, if any, of sending most newsletters by e-mail, while still sending some copies in paper form.

### **Membership Report**

Ney explained that according to State Bar Reports, the Section is currently classified as a small section and its membership (420) represents only 2% of the lawyers of Texas. At one time, the Section had more than 500 members.

D'Metria Benson agreed to contact Kathy Casarez at the State Bar for a list of Section members and a list of last year's members who have not yet paid dues. She will send the list of members to all council members by e-mail. She will organize the list, by county, of those people who have not paid dues and send each council member a list of people to contact about renewing membership. Council members should contact the people listed, asking for them to renew membership. In addition, council members should try to determine why former members decide against renewing membership and send that information to Benson.

Ingraham and Kathy Cannon agreed to attend the new lawyers' induction ceremony in Austin on November 17, 2003, to hand out information about the Section (brochures and membership forms) to newly licensed lawyers. They will try to compile a list of lawyers who seem interested in the section. They will explain that lawyers will not be assessed dues from the Section during the first year following licensure.

### **Pro Bono Report**

Ney asked the council to read Harrison's report on the results of the Section's pro bono project. Because of the tremendous efforts of Harrison, the Section raised \$1350.00 at the State Bar Annual Meeting to give to Women's Advocacy Project.

Ney brought book bags to sell to Council members who could not attend the annual meeting, saying that Harrison hoped to raise additional money so that the Section could send a total of \$1500.00 to Women's Advocacy Project.

### **Chronologist's Report**

Duvall said that she would interview Barbara Lin in Dallas. She is a 1976 graduate of Southern Methodist University who has been instrumental in getting law firms to hire women. Ingraham volunteered to interview Judge Alma Lopez of San Antonio.

Benson suggested that Mary Ellen Hicks should also be interviewed.

### **Web Site Report**

Ingraham has prepared a draft paper on how a member of the council can keep the web master informed on what items need to be placed on the Section's web site. She suggested several additions to the web site, including:

- CLE events page should advertise CLE events of various organizations;
- Newsletter page should have an index for finding information from past newsletters;
- By-laws and Council list need to be updated; and
- Membership form page should be in a form that prospective members could fill out and return to the State Bar on line.

She recommended that the Council continue to work with Arron who is the current web master.

### **Old Business**

Moore, a board member of Texas Women Lawyers (TWL) agreed to keep the council informed on activities of TWL.

Ingraham, a member of the Supreme Court's Gender Bias Task Force, agreed to be the Section's liaison to the task force.

### **New Business**

Ney asked that each council member chair a Section committee and also serve on another committee. The committees are the following:

- Annual meeting
- CLE
- Newsletter
- Web site
- Membership
- Chronology
- Pro Bono/ Fundraising
- Awards Committee
- Nominations Committee

### **CLE Project**

Gina Benavides agreed to contact State Bar President Betsy Whitaker about Whitaker's promise at last year's local bar leaders seminar to have a conference of all women's bar associations. Benavides will explain that the Section would like to help Whitaker and Kim Askew, Chair of the State Bar Board, who also agreed with Whitaker's promise, develop, plan and implement the conference as soon as possible.

Samaniego agreed to contact Amy Larsen of the State Bar to solicit help in conducting a continuing legal education seminar that could be a live presentation or a telephone conference and should have a theme that could be on a substantive or current events issue that affects women.

Once Benavides and Samaniego make their contacts, they will inform Ney of the outcome so that Ney can get a consensus of the council on an approach to this year's continuing legal education event, if any.

### **Annual Meeting**

Oxford said that she is considering a program to recognize local women bar associations and/or to have a panel of three or four lawyers to discuss whether women's issues are still relevant. Council members suggested titles such as "Defining the New Women's Movement", or "New Women, Old Issues" and suggested that the continuing legal education event and the annual meeting have a similar theme. Samaniego will help Oxford with planning the annual meeting.

### **Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting will be **by telephone, beginning at 6 p.m. on Monday, November 24, 2003.** In addition, a meeting in Austin is planned for March 6; however, that date is tentative.

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

(original signature on file)

Carolyn F. Moore  
Acting secretary

September 14, 2003

