

**BOARD OF BAR COMMISSIONERS  
JULY 31, 2025 MEETING MINUTES  
Sandia Resort & Casino, Albuquerque, NM  
In Person and Zoom**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Erin M. Atkins  
Daniel J. Behles  
Allison H. Block-Chavez  
Aja N. Brooks  
Sean M. FitzPatrick  
Connie J. Flores  
Parker B. Folse  
Tomas J. Garcia  
Chrystian Gonzalez  
David P. Lutz  
Meryl Sutton

Dylan O'Reilly  
Jessica A. Perez  
Brett Phelps  
Lauren Riley  
Andréa Salazar  
Joseph F. Sawyer  
Steven S. Scholl  
Simone M. Seiler  
Lucy H. Sinkular  
Mitchell L. Mender  
Elizabeth J. Travis

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Olga Serafimova

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Kris Becker  
Ian Bezpalko  
Judge Carl J. Butkus  
Kasey Daniel  
Kim McNulty

Jerry Miller  
Pam Moore  
Stormy Ralstin  
Richard Spinello  
Chief Justice David K. Thomson

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**A. Approval of May 16-17, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Block-Chavez made a motion to approve the May 16-17, 2025 Meeting Minutes; the motion was seconded and it passed.

**B. Swearing-in of New Commissioners**

Chief Justice David K. Thomson attended the meeting to conduct the swearing-in of the new commissioners as follows: Chrystian J. Gonzalez, Third and Sixth Judicial Districts; Dylan O'Reilly, Out-of-State District; and Lauren E. Riley, YLD Chair.

**II. STRATEGIC PLANNING**

**A. Rule 24-101(A) NMRA Rules Governing the NM Bar Update**

Executive Director Spinello reported that the Board completed its review of the first part of the rule, objectives one through five, which focus on who we serve. The second half of the rule, objectives 6 through 10, focus on what we should be doing as a State Bar. So, we're halfway through the review of the rule and we'll be starting on objective six at the October meeting.

**B. 2026-2028 Three-Year Strategic Plan**

President Brooks reported that Retreat Facilitator Dr. Everette Hill provided the draft Strategic Plan Report from the Board Retreat in May, which was included in the materials. The last section wasn't included in the report, so we will get that section and finalize the report. The Foundation also has a Strategic Plan that was facilitated

by Dr. Hill, and one of the things the Foundation Board discussed was how to tackle the plan looking at the priorities and timelines. What came out of that was a desire to have subcommittees of the BBC and Bar Foundation Boards review the plans and then the subcommittees will work together to flush out the plans. Commissioner Travis commented that the subcommittees will be able to parse through the details of the plan more easily than the whole board could accomplish that. Executive Director Spinello noted that the individual groups didn't report out at the BBC retreat like they did at the Foundation retreat, so the Board is seeing the report for the first time. Commissioner Sinkular made a motion to form a special committee and asked for all commissioners, whether they're on the committee or not, review the report and provide any input to the committee; the motion was seconded and following a vote, it passed. Commissioners were asked to email Kris Becker to volunteer for the committee.

### **III. ACTION ITEMS**

#### **A. 2026 BBC Officer Nominations for President-Elect and Secretary-Treasurer**

President Brooks requested nominations for the offices of President-Elect and Secretary-Treasurer for 2026. Commissioner Block-Chavez nominated Commissioner Sinkular to the position of President-Elect. No other nominations were received. Commissioner Atkins made a motion to close nominations for the position of President-Elect; the motion was seconded and it passed. Commissioner Sinkular nominated Commissioner Garcia to the position of Secretary-Treasurer. No other nominations were received. Commissioner Atkins made a motion to close nominations for the position of Secretary-Treasurer; the motion was seconded and it passed. The positions will be voted on at the October meeting.

#### **B. One Appointment to DNA – People's Legal Services, Inc.**

There was one open position on DNA – People's Legal Services, Inc., Board. Letters of interest were received from the following: Chad O. Abeyta, Cody Jeff and Amber Macias-May, as well as a recommendation from DNA – People's Legal Services, which were included in the materials. Following a vote by secret ballot, Chad O. Abeyta was reappointed to the DNA Board for another four-year term.

#### **C. YLD Request to Provide CLE Credit for Pro Bono Work**

YLD Chair Lauren Riley reported that the YLD is requesting CLE credit for their Veteran's Legal Clinics and Wills for Heroes events, which will help them recruit more lawyers to volunteer for these events. Commissioner Block-Chavez made a motion to approve YLD's request to provide CLE credit for pro bono work at their legal clinics and events; the motion was seconded and it passed.

#### **D. Supreme Court Liaison Appointments to UJI-Civil Committee and Children's Court Rules Committee**

President Brooks reported that there were two vacancies for liaisons to the UJI-Civil Committee and the Children's Court Rules Committee. Commissioner Salazar was appointed to the UJI-Civil Committee, but she is unable to meet when the committee meets. President Brooks asked for a volunteer to serve as the liaison to the committee.

Policy and Bylaws Committee Chair Sean FitzPatrick reported that this has been an issue with these committees that have liaisons and whether they can vote at or participate in meetings. The Policy and Bylaws Committee had a discussion of the liaison's role and what it should be, and they reached out to the Supreme Court to discuss it, since making a change would require a rule change. Executive Director Spinello reported that he met with Chief Justice Thomson on another topic and brought these issues up with him during that meeting. Chief Justice Thomson informed us that he's taken care of one of the issues, so that if we have an appointment to a Supreme Court board or committee, we don't need to appoint a separate liaison to that board or committee; the board member may act as a liaison and may or may not be able to share what the committee discusses. He is going to make some time for Executive Director Spinello and Chair FitzPatrick to meet on some of the other issues—liaisons in general, how they're treated differently among the various committees, and whether we should have an actual board appointment to the BBE. Following the meeting with the Court, the Policy and Bylaws Committee will make a recommendation. Chair FitzPatrick is serving as a board member to the UJI-Civil Committee and volunteered to also serve as the liaison to the committee.

President Brooks reported that Commissioner Seiler was serving as the liaison to the Children's Court Rules Committee, but she was appointed to serve on a Tech Committee for the Second Judicial District Court and isn't able to do both. Commissioner Atkins volunteered to serve as the liaison to the committee through the end of the year.

#### **IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

##### **A. Executive Committee Report**

President Brooks reported on the Executive Committee meetings and action as follows:

1. The committee met on April 14<sup>th</sup> to review and approve the licensing late fee waivers for non-compliance.
2. The committee approved via email a sponsorship in the amount of \$800 for the UNM Scholarship Golf Tournament.
3. The committee approved a funding request for Paralegal Division Liaison Meryl Sutton to attend the EAJ Conference in the amount of \$1,000.
4. The committee met on June 12 to approve the Annual Awards Committee's recommendations for the 2025 award recipients.
5. The committee met on July 21 to approve the agenda for this meeting.

Commissioner Block-Chavez made a motion to ratify the action taken by the Executive Committee; the motion was seconded and it passed.

##### **B. Finance Committee Report**

The Finance Committee met the day prior to the Board meeting, and Secretary-Treasurer Sinkular reported on the following:

1. Approved the May 15, 2025 Meeting Minutes; and
2. Reviewed the April and May 2025 financials and recommended they be accepted; Secretary-Treasurer Sinkular made a motion out of the committee to accept the April and May 2025 financials and the motion passed. The June 2025 financials will be sent out once finalized.

##### **C. Audit Committees Report and Recommendation**

The 2024 Combined Financial Audit was sent out prior to the meeting. SJT Group LLC presented the Audit at the Joint Meeting of the Audit Committees of the State Bar and Bar Foundation the day prior to the Board meeting. Executive Director Spinello noted that the auditors issued an unmodified opinion, and there was no management letter issued, and there were no disagreements with management or adjusting entries. Secretary-Treasurer Sinkular made a motion to accept the 2024 Combined Financial Audit, and the motion passed.

##### **D. Joint Meeting of the Executive Committees Report**

President Brooks reported on the joint meeting of the State Bar and Bar Foundation Executive Committees. The committees discussed that the Foundation is being considered for an internet portal project. Executive Director Spinello reported that the ATJ Commission has a subgroup working on an internet portal, which is a resource to be used by members of the public and those intermediaries where those people go—libraries, churches, etc. The portal will be able to ascertain what the issue is and provide legal information, resources and legal service providers throughout NM. The ATJ Commission just voted to send the project to the Supreme Court, and the Bar Foundation is one of the three entities they are looking at to host the project.

The committees also discussed funding for LREP. Director of Legal Services Kasey Daniel reported that LREP will be awarded the grant for the senior legal helpline that has been with LREP for 35 years; it was previously funded at \$297,000, and the Aging & Long Term Services Department informed them that they will be awarding

the program \$200,000. One of the staff attorneys left and they won't be filling that position, so that will help with the shortfall. She also reported that LREP has historically been billed per case and they asked if that could be changed to be more like MMH which bills by the hour, and they changed the contract pursuant to the request. President Brooks asked about any grants to make up for the funding, and Director of Legal Services Daniels responded that they will be talking with the new Development Director about fundraising for those programs. She noted that neither LREP or MMH applies for or receives federal funding from the LSC.

The committees also discussed the Fellows Program that the Bar Foundation Board has approved. Executive Director Spinello reported that we were trying to do a soft rollout at the Annual Meeting, but the technology piece hasn't been worked out yet. The software for a donor database is available through our company Euclid, but we weren't able to get that worked out in time for the Annual Meeting.

The committees also discussed the Strategic Plan Reports and will be appointing committees to review the plans further.

#### **E. Member Services Committee Report**

Member Services Committee Chair Liz Travis reported that the committee met in April and reviewed selected sections and committees pursuant to the bylaws. It's a four-year review of their annual reports and finances. The committee reviewed the Bankruptcy, Cannabis, NREEL, and Real Property, Trust and Estate Sections and recommended approving all of them to continue. Chair Travis made a motion out of committee to approve the recommendation, and the motion passed. They're going to be looking at filling board slots on some of the sections. They changed the bylaws to allow the rollover of funds, and one of the things they're going to be discussing is putting a cap on what they're rolling over.

#### **F. Annual Meeting Planning Committee Report**

President Brooks reported that the Annual Meeting Planning Committee met on June 3 and reviewed the annual meeting models as well as the history and financial information. We talked about this year and future Annual Meetings. Commissioner Block-Chavez reported that she met with Executive Director Spinello and staff after the meeting to discuss ideas, including a family friendly annual meeting in Durango and two regional meetings in the northern and southern parts of the state, and we'll be meeting again after the Annual Meeting to review the options. She also reported that we will be hosting the Jackrabbit Bar Conference in 2026 at the La Posada Hotel in Santa Fe, June 4-6.

#### **G. Policy and Bylaws Committee Report**

See report under III.D. above.

### **V. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

#### **A. President Report**

President Brooks reported on the following:

1. Western States Bar Conference

She and Commissioner Sinkular attended the conference in Phoenix, AZ; they had a CLE on the holocaust, and we have a breakout similar to that at our Annual Meeting.

2. Albuquerque Bar Association Law Day Lunch at the State Bar

She attended the Law Day luncheon on May 1, cosponsored by the State Bar.

3. Leadership Summit

She attended the Leadership Summit on May 2 with chairs of the voluntary bars, affinity associations, and law students. There were about 30 people in attendance, and Equity in Justice Attorney Abby Lewis did a great job coordinating the event.

4. Jackrabbit Bar Conference

She and Commissioner Block-Chavez attended the conference in Utah; they had CLEs on water law and polygamy, and it was a good conference.

5. New Admittee Swearing-in Ceremony

She attended and spoke at the new admittee ceremony at the UNM School of Law in April.

6. Judicial Conclave

She spoke at the Judicial Conclave on June 11 about the State Bar.

7. State Bar and Bar Foundation Outreach Trip to Hobbs

She and Bar Foundation President Stefanie Davis did a roadshow to Hobbs and are planning to visit other areas of the state.

8. Bar Foundation Retreat and Special Meeting

She attended the Bar Foundation retreat and the special meeting regarding the ATJ Portal Project and the Fellows Program.

9. State Bar Staff Brunch

The Board and past presidents hosted a brunch for State Bar and Bar Foundation staff on July 10, which was very much appreciated by the staff.

10. "Just Mercy" Book Club

She participated in a book club on Keynote speaker Bryan Stevenon's book *Just Mercy*.

11. 2025 Annual Meeting

She highlighted the Annual Meeting Program and theme "Together Towards Justice," the keynote speaker's book, the postcard, and the Glitz in a Glass fundraising event. She thanked the board members for their Annual Meeting sponsorships.

**B. NM State Bar Foundation President Report**

Bar Foundation President Stefanie Davis was not in attendance at the meeting, so no report was provided.

**C. Executive Director Report**

Executive Director Spinello's written report was included in the materials. A handout of data on the pro bono reporting from the 2024-2025 licensing season was distributed to the Board. He reviewed the highlights of the data and noted that only half of the members reported doing pro bono work. There might be an opportunity to do a targeted marketing for people to do their pro bono or make contributions to the Bar Foundation. Paralegal Division Liaison Meryl Sutton suggested talking with EAJ Executive Director Heather Norfleet to discuss collaborating on our efforts. Executive Director Spinello stated that when we developed the pro bono rule, there's language about government attorneys in the committee commentary and we could make that a part of the rule and provide

education on it; we could also look at the wording on the licensing form for pro bono, and information for out-of-state attorneys.

**D. State Bar Representative Reports**

1. Senior Lawyers Division

SLD Delegate Dan Behles provided a written report which was included in the materials. He reported that he will be asking for the Board's assistance contacting families of deceased attorneys for their annual SLD In Memoriam Scholarship Reception in November.

2. Young Lawyers Division

YLD Chair Lauren Riley provided a written report that was emailed to the Board prior to the meeting. She reported that the Division has done a few new collaborations and did mock interviews for the clerkship program this year, which was requested by the Supreme Court. They also partnered with the Bar Foundation through Kasey Daniel and trained people how to understand the ABA answers portal. They worked with Jerry Miller on the Wills for Heroes program to get it cloud based. The Division discussed Constitution Day; they may be able to host something next year and start the planning for it this year. The Hispanic Bar brought back Law Camp this year, and YLD sponsored it and put on a mock trial in front of a district court judge.

3. Paralegal Division

Paralegal Division Liaison Meryl Sutton provided a written report as well as a report on the EAJ Conference which were included in the materials. Her biggest takeaway was how to make pro bono more accessible to private attorneys.

4. District Bar Events / Bar Commissioner Districts Reports

Commissioners reported on events in their districts, including the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Bench and Bar Conference, the VAP and Pro Bono Committee Pro Bono Fair in Roswell, planning for an event in the 11<sup>th</sup> judicial district, and a summer party on August 22 in Las Cruces hosted by the Southern NM Bar Association.

5. ABA Report

Nicole Werkmeister, the State Bar's delegate to the ABA House of Delegates, submitted a written report on the ABA Midyear Meeting, which was included in the materials.

**VI. OTHER BUSINESS**

**A. Recognition of Bill Sleese on his retirement**

President Brooks recognized Bill Sleese on his retirement from the State Bar as the Professional Development Programs Director.

**B. New Business**

1. Commissioner O'Reilly reported that the Supreme Court is going to be asking for rules for the alternative licenses, and we should be ready to assist with the groundwork when that happens.
2. President Brooks reported that the Supreme Court is creating a Bench and Bar AI Committee and how it affects the profession, and the Court asked for a board member to serve on that committee. Commissioners Salazar and Flores volunteered to serve on the committee.

**C. Adjourn**

There being no further new business, Commissioner Atkins made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:19 a.m.; the motion was seconded and it passed.