

# UTAH STATE BAR COMMISSION MEETING

## MINUTES

**Friday, January 30, 2026**

**In Attendance:** Tom Bayles, Brett Chambres, Christian Clinger, Jess Couser, Yvette Donosso, Rick Hoffman, Ezzy Khaosanga, Chrystal Mancuso-Smith, Mark Morris, Shawn Newell, and Tyler Young.

**Ex-Officio Members:** Cara Tangaro, Erik Christiansen, Tiffany Shimada, Alex Vandiver, Nicole Johnston, Holly Nelson, Nick Stiles.

**Not in Attendance:** Kim Cordova, Miriam Allred and Olivia Shaughnessy, and Ex-Officio members Dean Kronk Warner, Dean Moore, Nate Alder, Jennifer Peterson, Jessica Ramirez, Eli McCann, and Katie Woods.

**Also in Attendance:** Executive Director Elizabeth A. Wright, Assistant Executive Director Aubrey Schade, General Counsel Maribeth LeHoux, Communications Director Jennifer Weaver, Finance Director Nathan Severin, and Deputy General Counsel of Admissions Emily Lee.

### 1. President's Welcome and Reports

#### 1.1 Review Legislative Matters

Mr. Young discussed the legislative session, as well as Commission procedures regarding positions and action on legislation.

a. Legislation we are monitoring:

- a. HB 260: Unauthorized Practice of Law amendments – Rep. Loubet worked with the Bar's UPL Committee on the legislation
- b. HB 262: Judicial Election Amendments – increase percentage of votes needed in retention elections
- c. HB 274: Sentencing commission Amendments – removes all defense attorneys from the Sentencing Commission
- d. HB 366: Judicial Cases Distribution Amendment – changes how cases are assigned
- e. HB 392: Constitutional Court Amendments – this bill just came up Tuesday with a hearing on Wednesday
- f. HJR 005: Proposal to Amend Utah Constitution – Judicial Nominations. It would no longer be required for the governor to use the judicial nominating commission.
- g. HJR 13: Proposal to Amend Utah Constitution – Judicial Retention - allows legislature to call retention elections
- h. Adding new judges – supreme court and appellate. The Bar has opposed the new supreme court judges but approved the others

- i. SJR 008: Joint Resolution to Initiate a Law School at UVU – exploring the possibility of creating a law school at UVU
  - j. SJR 3 – currently circled. It limits how lawyer license fees can be used. Says it's the job of the legislature to regulate a fee
- b. Phone conference calendar: the Commission meets every Tuesday after 4 to review the votes of the GRC.
- c. Rapid response procedure: Bar President and the Executive Committee can agree to oppose or support legislation when there is not time to wait for the regular Tuesday meeting. This allows Bar president to make statements, give interviews, and appear quickly to testify if necessary. It also allows the Bar to notify licensees of the pending legislation. The Commission will be informed of the rapid decision at the following Tuesday meeting.

## **1.2 Spring Convention Report**

Mr. Young encouraged commissioners to register for the Convention in St. George. The Commission meeting will be at 3pm on Wednesday, March 11, followed by a dinner at 6 pm at Wood, Ash & Rye. Ms. Vandiver discussed two events being hosted by YLD - Wills for Heroes and Top Golf event.

## **1.3 St. George Room Reservation Reminder**

Ms. Wright reminded the Commissioners to reserve their rooms for the Convention and that rooms were filling up quickly.

## **1.4 Bar Elections Reminder**

Mr. Young reminded the Commission that all petitions are due on February 2, 2026.

## **1.5 Commission Speaks Update**

Mr. Young discussed the Commission Speaks events. We have had 4 events in the smaller cities. There's a Cache County event planned for Spring. There was an event in Heber in January. The events have been well attended, and people are interested in learning what the Commission and Bar are doing.

## **2. Action Items**

### **2.1 Nominate Tom Bayles to Run for President-Elect**

Mr. Young discussed that Mr. Bayles is running for President-Elect. Mr. Bayles provided comments regarding his nomination.

Ms. Khaosanga made a motion nominating Mr. Bayles as President-Elect. Mr. Morris seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

### **2.2 Approve 2026-2027 Licensing Fee**

Finance Director Mr. Severin recommended keeping all licensing fees at the current amounts for the 2026-2027 year. This will require the Bar to use reserves to meet expenses. Over the last few years, expenses have been added, particularly due to inflation, without additional revenue. Mr. Severin discussed the strategy of zero-based budgeting, where everything has to be approved.

Mr. Severin is working hard to decrease the rate at which expenses grow.

Mr. Hoffman made a motion to approve the 2026-2027 Licensing Fee. Mr. Chambers seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

### **2.3 Approve 2026-2027 Fund for Client Protection Assessment**

Ms. Wright discussed fund for Client Protection and the requirement that it be maintained at \$200,000. During the last year, there were many claims made that were paid out, so the fund needs to be replenished. A fee is assessed for active attorneys. The fee in 2026 will be \$10 in order to maintain the Fund at the required amount

Ms. Khaosanga made a motion to approve the \$10 assessment for the Fund for Client Protection. Ms. Donosso seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

### **2.4 Approve Admissions Rule Changes**

Ms. Lee, Deputy General Counsel for Admissions, presented proposed rule changes to the admissions rules on behalf of the Admissions Committee. The proposed rules changes were as follows:

- Changing the age to be admitted to 18. It is currently 21. This was brought to us by a U of U student who will be under 21 when she graduates.
- Rule 14-712 – Qualifications for Admission Based on the UBE. Utah will begin administering the Next Gen Bar starting in July 2028. Other jurisdictions will begin administering it as soon as July 2026. We will decide our cut score as we get closer to 2028, but will allow transfer scores for admission that are equivalent to our current 260 passing score.
- 14-809: Practice Pending Admission. This allows practice under supervision for individuals who have a passing UBE score or are admitted in another jurisdiction. However, for student examinees, there are a few weeks between when people are notified of their passing score and are admitted. This new rule would allow student applicants who have passed the bar and paid fees to request a certificate to practice prior to being admitted.

Ms. Khaosanga made a motion to approve the proposed admission rule changes. Ms. Mancuso-Smith seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

### **2.5 Publication of EAOC Opinion**

Ms. LeHoux introduced the topic, informing the Commission that the EAOC had drafted an opinion but prior to it being published, the Court sent for comment a proposed rule change on the subject of the opinion. Mr. Young discussed the specifics of the opinion, and the changes to referral fees based on the Sandbox.

In order to give the Commission a chance to review the draft opinion, it was decided that it would be sent to the Commission and voting on publishing the opinion would be conducted by email.

### **2.6 Approve Spring Convention Awards**

Mr. Clinger presented the award recipients that the Awards Committee had selected.

1. Well-Being Impact: The Committee recommends W. Matthew Hall. The Commission discussed possible presenters of the award, including Danny Hawkes or the nominator.

Mr. Young made a motion to accept the recommendation for the Well-Being Impact award. Mr. Newell seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

2. Dorothy Merrill Brothers Award for the Advancement of Women in the Legal Profession. The Committee is seeking additional nominations for this award.

3. Raymond Uno for the Advancement of Minorities in the Legal Profession: Erik Christiansen stepped out of the meeting for this discussion since he was a nominee. . After discussing the recommended nominees, the Commission selected Erik Christiansen.

Ms. Donosso made a motion to accept the recommendation of Erik Christiansen for the Raymond Uno award. Ms. Couser seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

### **3. Information Item**

#### **3.1 Communications Report**

Ms. Weaver provided an update on the work she has been doing and the impacts it has had on media followers as well as website visitors. We have seen an increase in members of the public looking for a lawyer, as well as lawyers looking for jobs. We have had high viewership of the video on the oath, and she will continue to focus more on education for the public. She also discussed other earned media.

Ms. Weaver informed the Commission that the Bar would be having a press conference on Tuesday at the legislature, addressing concerns about some proposed bills.

Mr. Clinger made a motion requesting Ms. Weaver present to the Commission recommendations on news monitoring services. Mr. Young seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

#### **Adjournment.**

The Commission adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

#### **Consent Agenda.**

The Commission approved by consent the following items:

- Minutes of the November 21, 2025 Commission Meeting

**Post-Meeting Action Items.**

Nomination materials were circulated to the Commission for their review. Voting by email, the Commission elected to award the Dorothy Merrill Award to Rebecca Skordas.

The EAOC Opinion on referral fees was circulated to the Commission for their review. Voting by email, the Commission approved publishing the opinion.