



**New York State Bar Association**  
**Environmental & Energy Law Section**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**



**April 26, 2023 – 1:30 PM**



Present: J. Rigano; Y. Hennessey; M. Hecker; A. Kendall; A. Jasiewicz; M. Baker; K. Bennett; M. Bogin; C. Braymer; A. Cinamon; D. Freeman; C. Howard; J. O'Sullivan; Z. Knaub; A. Knauf; R. Knoer; T. King; D. Krainin; J. Kublick; C. Leas; S. Lobe; J. Martin; K. Mintzer; D. Mussio; W. Mugdan; J. Parker; G. Port; T. Putsavage; N. Rigano; V. Robbins; S. Russo; J. Simpson; M. Sinkman; A. Stolorow; J. Stravino; H. Tollin; M. Villani; M. Zoghlin.

**Welcome- J. Rigano**

**Approval of Minutes:** W. Mugdan moved; G. Port second; Approved.

**Budget:** (J. O'Sullivan): Last year we ended with surplus of 89,000. In 2022, we added to our surplus; now \$118,000. Income year to date 44,000; Costs ~\$43,000. According to NYSBA policy, we can use the surplus for diversity initiatives and recruitment.

**Spring Conferences:** Legislative Forum was held today; Petroleum Spill Symposium, tentatively scheduled for May 10; Buffalo Conference on June 8; in person only and inviting law students for free.

**Government attorneys:** Discussion about whether to offer reduced/ free rate for Govt Attorneys to Petroleum Symposium; rate being charged is Section Member: \$100; Bar Member: \$125; Non-member: \$175; can have them participate for free by zoom. Discussed the success of the environmental compliance seminar in inviting governmental attorneys to attend for free via Zoom, even though we received permission to offer it for free only a few days in advance. We used email invitations, LinkedIn; and an e-blast to advertise. J. Stravino suggested charging just for the food and drink. A group will meet to discuss this further in the next few days.

**Buffalo Conference**

**Diversity Committee:** (C. Leas/ S. Lobe) This year is the 30<sup>th</sup> year of providing scholarships. Have 2 fellows for this summer both from NYU; names: Olivia Guarna; Earth Justice (Hawaiian native); published author; farm worker; Joe Brau: AG's Office. Summaries from last year's interns published in journal; intern at Region 2; DEC Region 2. Received rave reviews about the fellows. Approved increase in the amount to \$10,000. C. Leas asked to support that out of general funds and continue fundraising. Brought in \$5,500 from recent wine tasting. Additional fundraising at law school event, but should come from general funds. M. Hecker: Supportive to continue to fund, but fundraising is required; Need to get a core group together to explore opportunities, ex. established fund. C. Leas and W. Mugdan offer to participate in fundraising. W. Mugdan: Early days of program, partnered with NYC Bar and they contributed. Might reach out to them again. Foundations? Grant? M. Hecker: NYC Bar: They have their own fellowship for diversity. M. Gerrard sent a link to V. Robbins: \$120M fund for climate justice. Federal grantee is a problem; private foundations might be easier. M. Hecker will spearhead getting together a group.

**Government Attorney Discount:** Focused on increasing membership for government attorneys; Y. Hennessy is leading the charge. (1) Allow government attorneys to attend events for free; received written permission from Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government and received permission from David Miranda. (2) Received written confirmation from Commission on reduced rates to governmental attorneys; need to get NYSBA agree. J. Rigano: President-elect asked what he could do; he will help. J. Rigano spoke to him about the government attorney discount and will continue the conversation. G. Port: Need to distinguish between programs as a Section and those going through the NYSBA; more flexible to do things with our own section. Annual meeting; may be different. If food under a certain amount; no issues. Y. Hennessy: \$15 is the number in the regulations.

**Solo/ Small firm discount:** T. Putsavage: unaware of effort re: govt attys; compared with three states; see analysis attached to agenda. J. Rigano: Should we raise issue of solo/small discount, retired attorneys with NYSBA? Y. Hennessy: we should discuss this further.

**Law School Initiative (J. Rigano):** Have implemented a program where we have a 1-1.5 hour session at each of the law schools with their environmental law society, including a presentation on the bar and substantive issues. Students can join for free; we serve food and hand out swag. Touro was the first one and was a success. 100 new members from Touro alone. We are looking at two per semester: Pace, Buffalo in the fall. G. Port: Need to keep track of who is staying in NY because this is a very labor intensive effort. Discussion about developing a list of 4-5 talking points for each presentation.

**Essay Contest:** M. Villani: Writing competition is underway. June 1 is the deadline. In the past, discussed if there's a tie, should we split the amount. There are often ties. We are not living up to what we promised. Need to have a conversation about the budget; Can our budget handle it. M. Villani made a motion that if there is a tie, they would each get the full value of the prize. Second by G. Port. J. Rigano: add that it needs to be added to the budget. A. Kendall: Questioned whether there should be multiple prizes for first place; asked about whether there should be a different process for scoring so that there's no ties. G. Port calls the motion. Motion passed.

**Fall Conference:** Sagamore; September 26-27; 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the APA; Working with Jan Kublick; taking suggestions on recreational activities. Suggestions: Morgan Steamship.

**New business:** Insurance conference: need a new chair; traditionally in October; need new folks to get involved.

J. Rigano thanks the Section for a wonderful year as chair.