

**STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES**

President McGill called the meeting to order at 9:41 a.m. on Friday, July 25, 2025, in the Boardroom at the Michael Franck building in Lansing, Michigan.

Commissioners present:

David C. Anderson, Secretary  
Erika L. Bryant, Vice President  
Aaron V. Burrell  
Hon. B. Chris Christenson  
Alena Clark  
Ponce D. Clay  
Tanya N. Cripps-Serra  
Patrick J. Crowley  
Sherrie L. Detzler  
Robert A. Easterly  
Jacob G. Eccleston  
Nicole A. Evans  
Lisa J. Hamameh, President-Elect  
Claudnyse D. Holloman  
Thomas H. Howlett, Treasurer  
Elizabeth A. Kitchen-Troop  
Suzanne C. Larsen

Joshua A. Lerner  
James L. Liggins, Jr.  
James W. Low  
Ashley E. Lowe  
Elizabeth L. Luckenbach  
Silvia A. Mansoor  
Gerard V. Mantese  
Gerrow D. "Gerry" Mason  
Joseph P. McGill, President  
Thomas P. Murray, III  
Takura N. Nyamfukudza  
Nicholas M. Ohanesian  
John W. Reiser III  
Douglas B. Shapiro  
Hon. Kristen D. Simmons  
Danielle Walton

Commissioners absent:

Hon. David A. Perkins

Consent Agenda

The Board received the minutes from the June 13, 2025, Board meeting.  
The Board received the recent activities of the president.  
The Board received the recent activities of the executive director.  
The Board received the FY 2025 financial reports through May 2025.  
The Board received Client Protection Fund claims.  
The Board received Unauthorized Practice of Law claims.

President McGill asked if any items needed to be removed from the consent agenda. There were none.

A motion was offered to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded and approved.

**Election of Officers**

President McGill informed the Board that three candidates submitted their names for consideration for the position of secretary for the 2025-2026 Board of Commissioners: Commissioners Larsen, Low, and Mason. President McGill asked if there were any nominations from the floor; hearing none, a motion was made to close the nominations. The motion was seconded, and the motion passed.

President McGill appointed Commissioners Clay, Detzler, and Nyamfukudza to serve as tellers.

Commissioners Larsen, Low, and Mason addressed the board per policy. Following the five-minute presentation by each candidate, President McGill opened the floor for questions for the candidates.

Upon completion of the question-and-answer session, President McGill asked for a motion that the vote be by secret written ballot and that the voting be announced and recorded as to the winner only, without the vote total and that the vote total will be known only to him, the tellers, and to any candidate who requests it. The motion was made, seconded, and passed. Ballots were distributed.

President McGill announced that President-elect Hamameh would succeed him as president of the State Bar of Michigan for the 2025-2026 bar year.

President McGill announces that Vice President Bryant would succeed President-elect Hamameh as president-elect of the State Bar of Michigan for the 2025-2026 bar year.

President McGill asked for a motion to nominate Treasurer Howlett as vice president of the State Bar of Michigan for the 2025-2026 bar year. President-Elect Hamameh made a motion, a vote was taken and passed unanimously.

President McGill asked if there is a motion to nominate Secretary Anderson as treasurer of the State Bar of Michigan for the 2025-2026 bar year. Treasurer Howlett made a motion, a vote was taken and passed unanimously.

President McGill announced that Commissioner Larsen was elected as secretary of the State Bar of Michigan for the 2025-2026 bar year.

A motion was offered and supported to destroy the ballots of the election. The motion passed.

### **Discussions: Challenges & Opportunities for the Profession and Justice System**

#### Update from the Alternative Funding for Trial Courts Workgroup

Tom Boyd, State Court Administrator

Mr. Boyd informed the Commission that the work of this workgroup. He provided an overview of the history trial court funding in Michigan and gave a high-level presentation of a new funding model recommended by the Trial Court Funding Commission, including the anticipated timeline for the next steps of the project. He also answered questions from the Commissioners. A report on the workgroup's recommendations will be released within the next several days.

#### Licensed Paralegal Pilot Program

Janet K. Welch, Consultant, State Court Administrative Office

Brian G. Wagoner, Court Analyst, State Court Administrative Office

and Emilie Tarsin, Councils and Commissions Manager, State Court Administrative Office

Ms. Welch, Mr. Wagoner, and Ms. Tarsin reported on the Supreme Court's Steering Committee for a Proposed Paralegal Licensure Pilot Program. The workgroup, formed from a Justice For All Commission recommendation, is expected to submit proposals by year-end, including State Bar participation in regulation. Commissioners discussed scope, process, and timing, and provided feedback for consideration.

**President and Executive Director's Report:** Joe McGill, President and Peter Cunningham, Executive Director.

President McGill shared with the Board that he has spent the past several months attending many meetings and events of sections, affinity bar, and geographical bar associations. He reported that sections and bar associations are doing well, post-Covid, with meetings and events that are well-attended and vibrant. In addition, President McGill reported that he has received overwhelmingly positive feedback at those events about the work that is being done by the State Bar of Michigan including support for the statement on the Rule of Law that the officers issued earlier this year.

#### Supreme Court Commissions Updates

Mr. Cunningham reported that the Supreme Court's Justice For All Commission, DEI Commission, and the Commission on Well-Being in the Law have met since the June Board meeting.

Mr. Cunningham reported that the survey on well-being in the law launched earlier this month. The survey is being done nationally by the Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs with participation in more than 30 states. Over half of the State Bar membership has received the survey. He reminded Commissioners to please complete the survey, if they received it.

A "Foundations of Practice" survey will be launched in early August and will be open for four weeks. This is a nationwide survey being conducted by the Law School Admissions Council, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, and the American Bar Association's Center for Bar Leadership. The survey was last conducted ten years ago; however, Michigan did not participate at that time. Over 30 states are participating in this year's survey, and it will help to identify skills that are needed in the practice of law, what is needed to be successful in practice, what new attorneys need to know, and identify what needs to be changed in the education system to make new attorneys practice ready.

Finally, a survey regarding violence against attorneys is scheduled to launch in the fall of 2025.

#### Staff Updates

Mr. Cunningham shared that Ms. Kathy Gardner, Assistant Executive Director, will be retiring later this summer. Ms. Gardner will be transitioning to part-time status and working remotely until her position is filled. This position has been posted online, and applications are being accepted.

A new Director of Research and Development was hired this week, but the individual is unable to begin until September.

Mr. Scott Atkinson who has been a Communications Specialist for the past couple of years has been promoted to Editor of the State Bar. He will oversee the editing of the Michigan Bar Journal as well as other State Bar content. His former position, communications specialist, has been posted, and is expected to be filled later this summer.

Ms. Kim Panter was promoted to the position of Application Development Manager. She will oversee and coordinate the projects of the IT department. This position has been vacant for over a year. Her former position as a Software Delivery & Business Strategy Lead has been posted.

Ms. JoAnn Hathaway retired earlier this month from the Practice Management Resource Center as an PRMC advisor. Her position will be replaced with a Practice Management Counsel position.

Ms. Stacie Palmer was hired as the new Human Resources Assistant. She filled the vacancy made by Alicia Walker who left earlier this year for a position closer to home. Ms. Palmer will be introduced at a future meeting.

Mr. Rob Mathis introduced Ms. Michelle Adams, who has been hired as the new ATJ Program Coordinator. Ms. Adams has experience with several non-profits, AmeriCorps alum, and an active member of the Junior League.

Mr. Cunningham shared that the staff organizational chart will be placed in the Convene Software program, which is expected to be ready for use by Commissioners within the next month. Convene will be a useful tool for use by the Board as it will be the repository for Board materials, communications for Committee meetings, and many other things. Mr. Cunningham advised the Commissioners to expect an invitation to join this new software platform in the coming weeks. SBM Staff is hopeful that all members will adapt to this intuitive platform quickly and then Convene will become the primary method for distribution of Board materials.

Ms. Raymer reported on implementation of the paid *Michigan Bar Journal* subscription for emeritus members, approved by the Board last year, which is expected to save approximately \$22,000 annually. Of the 4,245 emeritus members (growing about 10% per year), 1,742 currently receive the print edition; all will continue to receive the digital version at no cost. The subscription, priced at \$25 with automatic annual renewal, will launch August 18 with email and mailed notices, and will be available through the SBM store.

**Representative Assembly (RA) Report:** John W. Reiser, III, Chairperson

Chairperson Reiser shared that the next meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 19, 2025, at Detroit Marriott in Troy and will be held in hybrid format.

Chairperson Reiser expects a contested election for the position of clerk between Ms. Tanisha Davis from the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit and Ms. Marla Linderman Richelew from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Circuit. Mr. Reiser stated that Commissioner Clay has worked hard to help fill vacancies in Bay and Tuscola Counties.

There are two proposals up for consideration at September's meeting. One will include the 11 recommendations from the Legal Deserts Workgroup. There will be multiple listening sessions during the week of the RA meeting to learn more about these recommendations. The second proposal is from Commissioner Nicole Evans pertaining to sealing records for non-convictions. The Ethics Committee may present two additional proposals regarding MRPC 1.10(a), imputed disqualification, and 4.4(b), respecting the rights of third parties. If time allows, there may also be a presentation by Hon. Angela Sherigan about the Native American boarding schools in Michigan.

**Young Lawyers Section (YLS) Report:** Silvia A. Mansoor, Chairperson

Commissioner Eccleston provided the report for YLS in Ms. Mansoor's temporary absence. YLS held their ZooLAWgical event on July 12, 2025, with approximately 25-30 people in attendance. The YLS also held a joint event with the tax law section recently. Upcoming events include an Etiquette and Professionalism and Civility program, an Insurance and Indemnity Law event, and NTAC will be held October 24-26, 2025. Ms. Cripps-Serra announced that the BOC/YLS Challenge will be held on September 12 and be bocce ball at Palazzo Di Bocce in Auburn Hills at 3:00 p.m.

## **COMMISSIONER COMMITTEES**

**Public Policy:** Lisa J. Hamameh, Chairperson

President-Elect Hamameh stated that there is no report for the Public Policy committee.

**Strategic Planning and Engagement Committee (SPEC):** Erika L. Bryant, Chairperson  
Partnership Programs

Vice President Bryant reported that SPEC recommended to the Board three new partner programs for the State Bar of Michigan:

CARET Legal is a practice management software that automates everything from management to billing. The software assists firms to track and manage all aspects of their cases, automates manual workflows, provides reporting and analytics, and integrates billing, accounting, and payment processing into one software. CARET Legal is also working with the State Bar of Michigan to develop a succession planning module.

CaseMark is an AI powered platform that delivers concise summaries of simple and complex legal texts within minutes. The platform offers custom workflows, integration with existing platforms, security and privacy, and LLM routing engines to ensure sensitive legal content will not get blocked by content filters. Its concentration is security and privacy and focuses on providing the legal profession the tools to make their practices efficient. CaseMark is designed to work for all firm sizes, court reports, in-house counsel, legal aid, etc. It will be one of the first AI programs offered through preferred partnerships.

Querious is an AI program that transcribes routine client conversations into high-impact legal services through real-time insights and effortless follow-ups such as legal issues, relevant content, and suggested questions. The program integrates with various virtual meeting spaces like Zoom, Teams, and Google Meet and provides security and confidentiality in compliance with the model rules of professional responsibility. This program will also be one of the first AI programs offered through preferred partnerships.

Commissioner Bryant made a motion to approve these three partner programs, pending a marketing review by Communications, and contract review by General Counsel. The motion was supported, voted upon, and passed unanimously.

### Section By-Law Amendments

#### Young Lawyers Section

Commissioner Bryant made a motion to approve the proposed amendments to the YLS Bylaws as provided in the Board materials. The motion was seconded, voted upon, and passed unanimously.

#### 50-Year Golden Celebration and Great Lakes Legal Conference Reports

Commissioner Bryant noted the reports of these two events were provided in the Board materials. The 50-year Golden Celebration has received an average net promoter score of 82.6% over three years.

The average net promoter score for the Great Lakes Legal Conference over three years is 59.3. Commissioner Bryant highlighted the implementation of one-to-one sessions with SBM staff and members. Many attendees really enjoyed the networking component of this year's conference.

### Website Survey Results and Update

Ms. Raymer presented results of the website survey (≈350 respondents), noting strengths and weaknesses of the current layout. The site received a net promoter score of -25. She outlined guiding principles for improvement: strengthening the SBM brand, ensuring up-to-date and relevant content, and prioritizing user experience for both attorneys and the public.

### **Finance and Audit:** Thomas H. Howlett, Chairperson

#### Financial Report

Treasurer Howlett gave a financial report of FY 2025 through May 2025.

Treasurer Howlett introduced the FY2026 budget and described the process undertaken and Executive Director Cunningham provided an overview of the proposed FY 2026 budget. A motion was made to approve the budget as recommended by the Finance and Audit Committee. The motion was seconded and approved.

### **Professional Standards:** David C. Anderson, Chairperson

Secretary Anderson extended his gratitude to the committee members and the SBM for all their hard work.

## **FOR THE GOOD OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PROFESSION**

### **Comments or questions from Commissioners**

Commissioner Clay inquired about the Michigan Supreme Court's request for Board of Commissioners nominations. Executive Director Cunningham reviewed the process.

Ms. Bossenbery reminded Commissioners to register for the September Board meeting and the Inauguration and Awards Luncheon. She also informed Commissioners to expect an email within the next couple of days to identify their committee preferences and section liaison preferences for the 2025-2026 Bar year.

### **Comments or questions from the public**

Ms. Jody White provided comments to the Board on their personal experiences with the legal system.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:08 pm.