I. Introduction and Welcome

Karl Myers called the meeting to order and welcomed Committee members. Attendance was taken through members’ identification on Zoom. See below for the roll call.

II. Adoption of Minutes

Karl Myers introduced the minutes from the May 20, 2021 meeting, which were circulated in advance of the meeting. There were no comments. Dara DeCourcy moved to adopt the minutes, and Carl Solano seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously without amendment.

III. Financial Report

Jill Beck indicated that there were no updates to report. There were no questions.

IV. Subcommittee Reports

Karl noted that because it is a new bar year, the subcommittees will be reconstituted with new volunteers. There are three subcommittees: Education and Conference (i.e., CLE subcommittee), Website, and Rules and Technology. Karl solicited volunteers to participate in the subcommittees.

In response to a question from David Robbins regarding whether there is a membership roster for the subcommittees, Karl suggested that it would make sense to simply reconstitute the membership of the subcommittees because their level of activity has varied. David indicated that he would volunteer for the Education & Conference and Rules & Technology subcommittees.

A. Education & Conference

Karl Myers reported for the Education and Conference Subcommittee.

First, we have learned that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court is planning to center its celebration of its 300th anniversary in May 2022. It is expected to be organized around that month’s session week, which is the week of May 16, 2022. Additional details should be forthcoming soon.

Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Court has been trying to celebrate its 50th anniversary, which occurred in 2020. Those celebrations had been planned to take place in April 2022, in connection with the Commonwealth Court practicum. But the Commonwealth Court is considering moving that to December 2021 to avoid a conflict with the Supreme Court’s celebration in May 2022.
Karl noted that we had proposed to the Court our idea of a Pennsylvania Judicial Conference, and Jill Beck had reached out to the Supreme Court justices. One idea that was suggested to her was that our Committee could have a role in the anniversary celebrations by organizing a moot argument of an historical case, but that is tentative at this point. Jill agreed that things are very much in the planning stage, and said that the Court seemed open to other ideas for our participation. Jill will continue her communications with the Court. She suggested that our Committee have a seat on the Court’s planning committee.

David Robbins noted that the 1724 Courthouse in Chester, Pennsylvania is one of the first places where the Supreme Court sat and will have its 300th anniversary shortly. He suggested that the Court be made aware of that for potential incorporation into their program.

Pam Kance noted that the PBA meeting is the week before, so there is no interference.

Karl asked the Committee whether there is general support for the Committee participating in the planning of the Supreme Court’s anniversary celebrations. Several committee members indicated their agreement, and none opposed.

Maureen McBride noted that Chief Justice Baer has presented on the history of the Court, and that John Hare has authored a book discussing key concepts articulated by the Court’s cases.

Phil Yoon suggested that we check with Kathleen Wilkinson and PBA leadership to determine whether PBA has been asked to participate and that we coordinate accordingly. Karl agreed.

Karl also opened a discussion about ideas for the upcoming year, including for the fall. Jill Beck suggesting having a program for a “check-in” with the courts regarding a return to more normal protocols, and Maureen McBride said she would also be happy to work on this.

B. Website

Dara DeCourcy reported that the links on the website where checked and corrected were necessary, and that the Supreme Court IOPs were linked to. She is looking for a copy of the Superior Court and Commonwealth Court IOPs to link to. She also indicated that she would invite assistance from other members of the committee and requested that an email be sent to the membership soliciting volunteers.

C. Rules

Carl Solano stated that there were no rules updates to report. There were no questions.

III. Pro Bono efforts

Maureen McBride noted that Justice Baer has encouraged practitioners to participate in pro bono work, and that appellate practitioners are well-positioned to assist the courts and those in need of representation through pro bono work. Phil Yoon agreed and suggested that we develop a specific framework before approaching the courts. Maureen recalled that several years ago Judge Bowes had begun a pro bono initiative. Karl Myers recalled that there was a pilot
program in the Supreme Court for pro bono assistance for certain civil cases. For a program to work, there will need to be interest from the courts, because they will have to screen cases.

Richard Klein noted, with respect to plain language, that in Philadelphia, “pro se” cases are now “self-represented” cases, and the Prothonotary is now the Office of Judicial Records. He commented that it may be more difficult to come up with a replacement for “pro bono.” There followed a discussion of the importance of plain language to public access to the courts.

Karl Myers noted that appellate pro bono opportunities could be beneficial to younger attorneys. Richard Klein also noted that such experience can provide a useful perspective to trial lawyers.

Pam Kance suggested that the PBA pro bono coordinator may be able to assist. She also noted that the Environmental Energy Law Section works with the hearing board on pro bono cases, and they may have ideas for how a program would work.

Karl Myers suggested letting Phil Yoon’s discussions with the court proceed and that he coordinate with Maureen.

IV. Membership Development

Karl noted that bar associations are all struggling with membership, possibly because firms have reduced the number of bar memberships the will pay for due to the pandemic. PBA president Wilkinson has requested Committees to appoint a member to be a liaison to the PBA membership development committee. Karl requested that interested volunteers contact him.

V. Open Floor

Karl Myers opened the floor to comments.

With respect to membership, it was suggested that each person on our Committee encourage three persons to join our Committee. Karl noted that our Committee’s membership has steadily increased.

Judge Lally-Green suggested that there may be an opportunity to reach out to law school clinics through pro bono activity, which would also complement membership development efforts and would provide law students with valuable skills. She also suggested that it might make sense to work with the PBA Legal Academics Committee on that effort. Pam Kance noted that the PBA reaches out to law students and provides them free membership.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.
Roll Call:

1. Peter Adonizio
2. Jill Beck
3. Althea Bennett
4. Chester Corse
5. Dara DeCourcy
6. Pam Kance
7. Rachel King
8. Richard Klein
9. Hon. Maureen Lally-Green
10. Maureen McBride
11. Karl Myers
12. David Robbins
13. Carl Solano
14. Andrew Sperl
15. Phil Yoon
16. Thomas Wilkinson