

MINUTES

ALABAMA STATE BAR BOARD OF BAR COMMISSIONERS MEETING

**State Bar Building
415 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36104**

Friday, January 24, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

President Tom Perry convened this meeting of the Alabama State Bar Board of Commissioners at 10:03 a.m. in the board room of the Alabama State Bar building, Montgomery, Alabama. Commissioner Will Lee led the members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

The secretary took the roll of the Commission, and the following Commissioners were present:

Conrad Anderson	Fred Helmsing	Gregory Price
Pratt Austin-Trucks	Scott Holmes	John Rea
Raymond Bell	David Holt	Brandy Robertson
Edgar Black	Ralph Holt	Ryan Robichaux
Mark Boardman	Carmen Howell	Freddy Rubio
Sally Bowers	Mitch Kemmer	Pat Sefton
Jeff Bowling	Angela Kennedy	Julius Shanks
Randy Bozeman	Edwin Lamberth	Mitch Shelly
Will Broome	Bill Lancaster	Jeff Sherrer
Kitty Rogers Brown	David Langston	Tyler Sims
Brannon Buck	Will Lee	Elizabeth Smithart
Matthew Carter	Jorja Loftin	John Stamps
Hunter Compton	Felicia Long	Stephen Still
Lisa Cooper	Bob McMillan	Ron Strawbridge
Brad Cornett	Wallace Mills	Jimbo Terrell
Mark Debro	Tamara Neeley	Jerome Thompson
Lang Floyd	Steve Nicholas	Leila Watson
Jana Garner	Andrew Nix	Suntrease Williams-
Kirk Garrett	Ashley Peinhardt	Maynard
Lisha Graham	Lynn Perry	Robin Wolfe
Leon Hampton	Tom Perry	
Josh Hayes	Bobby Poundstone	

The following Commissioners were absent:

Clay Carr	Leslie Moore	Kyra Sparks
Joel Connally	Manish Patel	Andrew Stanley
Deborah Dunsmore	Chrissy Riddle	Brian Strength
Richard Fikes	Steven Savarese	Jeff Utsey
Lee Knowles	Holly Sawyer	
Doug Martinson	Doug Smith	

QUORUM PRESENT

Staff members in attendance included: Roman Shaul, Chad Coker, Merinda Hall, Melissa Warnke, Autumn Caudell, Olivia Walker, Jill Evans, Hilaire Armstrong, Karen Laneaux, and Shannon Knight, Cathy Sue McCurry, and Angie Burkhalter.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

President Perry asked for approval of the agenda.

COMMISSIONER JANA GARDNER MOVED TO APROVE THE AGENDA, SECONDED BY ROBIN WOLFE, AND APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

President Perry recognized all guest in attendance which included: Associate Justice Will Sellers; Dawn Hathcock, Executive Director of the Alabama Law Foundation; and Wilson Green, Editor of *The Alabama Lawyer*.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 1, 2024, MEETING

President Perry stated that the minutes of the November 1, 2024, Board Meeting had been transcribed and circulated prior to the meeting. He asked if there were any corrections, additions, or deletions. No changes were made.

COMMISSIONER PRATT AUSTIN-TRUCKS MADE MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 1, 2024, SECONDED BY MARK DEBRO, AND APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

PUBLIC REPRIMANDS

Two public reprimands were presented by President-Elect Fred Helmsing.

Oneonta, Alabama attorney **Alexander Mallory Smith** was issued a public reprimand without general publication by the Disciplinary Commission of the Alabama State Bar on January 24, 2025 for violating Rules 1.3 [Diligence] and 1.4 [Communication], *Alabama Rules of Professional Conduct*. The attorney represented the daughter of a motor vehicle accident victim in a wrongful

death case. The attorney failed to return phone calls or keep his client informed of the status of the matter. The attorney delayed turning over the case file to his client when requested. The case was dismissed due to inactivity, forcing the client to file a *pro se* motion to vacate the dismissal. The client terminated the attorney's representation shortly thereafter.

Boaz, Alabama attorney **Olan Frank Strother** was issued a Public Reprimand without General Publication by the Disciplinary Commission of the Alabama State Bar on January 24, 2025 for violating Rules 1.3 [Diligence], 1.4 [Communication], and 8.4(g) [Misconduct], *Alabama Rules of Professional Conduct*. A client retained Strother to represent her in an uncontested divorce in April 2019 for a fee of \$525.00. The client repeatedly attempted to telephone Strother regarding the status of the divorce without success. In October 2023, Strother responded to the client and told her that he believed he had already sent her the judgment of divorce. After hearing nothing further from Strother, the client filed a bar complaint on March 9, 2024. On April 25, 2024, Strother filed the uncontested complaint for divorce on the client's behalf. The paperwork submitted had been signed by the client and her husband on May 28, 2021. Strother failed to file the paperwork until after the client filed the instant complaint. The final decree of divorce was entered by the court on April 29, 2024.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Perry offered condolences to Commissioner Joel Connally in the loss of his father and referenced the destruction associated with a recent tornado to Commissioner Edwin Lamberth's Grove Hill office. Perry highlighted the success of the Toolbox Tours which were held in Columbiana, Dothan and Decatur. He announced the final tour locations as Greenville and West Alabama to be held in the spring. Perry spoke at a judicial education conference held in Montgomery and provided an update as to his Harvesting Hope program. Perry further spoke of his recent trip to Cuba with a group of the Cuba Task Force of the Alabama State Bar. He thanked Commissioner Felicia Long for representing the bar at the Judge's Mid-Winter meeting and honored former commissioner, Judge Chuck Price, for his years of service to the Alabama State Bar.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Secretary/Executive Director Terri Lovell highlighted the staff engagement efforts during the Toolbox Tours. Lovell spoke of the Chief Justice's luncheon honoring the VLP lawyers. She informed the commission of the retirement of Debbie Harper with the VLP program and introduced Jill Evans as the new Law Practice Management advisor. Lovell gave an update on the progress of ongoing financial and compliance audits and the nearing completion of the Fred Gray Courtyard. She reminded commissioners of those seats that are up for election in May and discussed the deadlines for qualifications. Finally, Lovell provided a list of members currently delinquent for non-payment of dues and requested they review and contact members should they so choose.

GENERAL COUNSEL'S REPORT

General Counsel Roman Shaul provided a brief overview of the actions of the Office of General Counsel for 2024. All numbers including bar complaints, reprimands and cases tried had

increased. Shaul, along with Dawn Hathcock, of the Alabama Law Foundation, provided a brief overview of the impact of the Supreme Court's Rule 1.15 change as it relates to IOLTA accounts.

LOCAL BAR REPORT

Commissioner Tamara Neely provided a brief overview of their November 8th CLE program held at the Little River Canyon Center and further reported on the ongoing work to establish a toy closet at the DeKalb County Courthouse.

Commissioner Mitch Shelly discussed his circuits ongoing efforts to host a CLE every other month and discussed his local court's efforts to develop and establish a program to train students about the legal profession at Athens State University.

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE REPORT

Director of Finance Merinda Hall informed the Board first quarter revenues are up approximately 2% and that spending was essentially down 4% across the board. Investments have regained losses suffered during the first quarter of FY 2025.

ADMISSIONS AND BAR REPORT

Karen Laneaux, Director of Admissions, provided an update on the February bar exam to be held at the Birmingham Jefferson Civic Center, and the Board of Bar Examiners' ongoing efforts to provide the Supreme Court with all information necessary regarding the implementation of a state specific component to the bar exam.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Legislative Counsel Suzi Huffaker provided an overview of the upcoming legislative session set to begin on February 4th. Huffaker stressed the need for strong relationships with each commissioner's local representative.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL REPORT

Commissioner Pat Sefton provided an overview of the Executive Council meetings since the last bar commissioner meeting. Two meetings had been held with the only action item being the approval of the board agenda.

Commissioner Sefton discussed the most recent vacancy on the board which had been created by Commissioner Chuck Price becoming a circuit judge in Jefferson County. The consensus of the board was to nominate Al Vance for this vacancy.

President Perry asked if there was a motion to suspend the rules for the appointment of said vacancy at the appropriate time in the agenda.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Past-President Brannon Buck discussed the minor tweak revisions to the Alabama Code of Professional Courtesy and his request, on behalf of the *Justice4AL* Task Force, to have commissioners check with their local courts and courthouses to see if the information is being displayed along with the need for any additional materials.

Wilson Green, editor of *The Alabama Lawyer*, discussed the ongoing efforts of the board of editors of the magazine to provide more transparency to the editorial process. Green discussed the desire of the editorial board to reduce the number of issues of *The Alabama Lawyer* to four per year.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE RULES WAS MADE BY DAVID HOLT, SECONDED BY JANA GARNER, AND APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

MOTION TO REDUCE *THE ALABAMA LAWYER* TO FOUR EDITIONS PER YEAR WAS MADE BY DAVID HOLT, SECONDED BY JANA GARNER, AND APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

ACTION ITEMS

Chad Coker, Director of Operations, requested the board take action on the dissolution of the Communications Law Section which contained no members and a balance of \$15.00 in the section account.

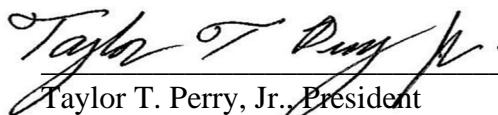
MOTION TO DISSOLVE THE COMMUNICATIONS LAW SECTION AND PLACE THE FUNDS IN THE SECTIONS ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNT WAS MADE BY RAYMOND BELL, SECONDED BY JOSH HAYES, AND APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE RULES WAS MADE BY PAT SEFTON SECONDED BY LYNN PERRY AND APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

MOTION TO APPOINT AL VANCE AS COMMISSIONER TO THE AT-LARGE POSITION (PLACE 4) WAS MADE BY PAT SEFTON, AND SECONDED BY PRATT AUSTIN-TRUCKS, AND APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

ADJOURNMENT

President Perry asked if there was any further business to come before the commission. There being no further business, he announced that the meeting was adjourned at 11:43 a.m.


 Taylor T. Perry, Jr., President
 Alabama State Bar

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Terri B. Lovell", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and elegant.

Terri B. Lovell, Secretary
Alabama State Bar