

L.A.W.S. LEDGER

2020—Volume 2

November 3, 2020



Last Dollar Rd. near Telluride
Photo by Angela Classen

2021 MEETING SCHEDULE

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were only able to hold one in-person meeting in 2020. At this point, all future meeting dates are tentative and subject to change due to whatever restrictions might be in effect at the time.

Tentative meeting dates for 2021 are as follows:

Wed. 3/10/21 at 4 pm (via Microsoft Teams or Zoom)

Wed. 6/16/21 at 4 pm

Wed. 8/18/21 at 4 pm

Wed. 10/20/21 at 4 pm

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GOALS OF L.A.W.S.

- To provide local access to continuing education
- To encourage a high order of ethical and professional attainment
- To promote the legal assistant profession
- To inform and educate the public and legal community about the effective utilization of legal assistants

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

October 25, 2020.....finally some rain....and then snow!!! So many trees still have their leaves and resulted in a lot of broken tree limbs or trees. But we need all the moisture we can get so I try to overlook the negative....in all aspects of our world these days.

So starts the fall and winter changes. Our LAWS group has not had any opportunities for meetings this past year due to the coronavirus. Let us hope that we can get back to meeting in 2021.

As President, I want to encourage everyone to be strong and positive, be kind to one another and keep in touch not only with family but each other. We are our best support group workwise. If anyone needs to reach out for WHATEVER reason, we are here to support each other. We are all out of our comfort zone this year. Whatever life throws our way, put one foot in front of the other and keep on going!

Penny Landeis

President



NEW WEB SITE COMING!

Because of the pandemic and resulting lack of meetings in 2020, and the fact that the LAWS web site renewal fee was coming due in early December (and before we are able to have another meeting), the officers of LAWS made a decision via e-mail vote to change the web site host. Cost, of course, was the utmost concern in making this decision.

Wix has been our web site host for several years now. When it was due to renew in early December, LAWS would have been charged \$204 to continue the current web site.

Several alternatives were researched, and the officers voted to discontinue the Wix site and set up a new web site with WordPress. The cost will be \$48/year for a basic plan, saving our association \$156/year.

Our domain name through Wix had already renewed, but we're able to transfer it to the new web site, so the domain remains the same: ws-laws.com. The old web site on Wix will expire on Dec. 3, 2021, so after that time, it will be hosted by WordPress, at the same web address.

As soon as it goes live, an announcement will be e-mailed to all those on our e-mail list. It should be

more user-friendly, both for viewers and admins, and easier to keep up-to-date.

Our Facebook presence will remain the same and nothing will change (except maybe a new cover photo).

Also, as you have by now figured out, the L.A.W.S. Ledger is getting a facelift as well and will likely see a few tweaks over time. We're still searching for free CLE articles to include. Also, if anyone has suggestions, ideas or feedback or leads on articles, please contact newsletter editor, Angela Classen.



MINUTES OF LAWS MEETING FEBRUARY 26, 2020 DUFFORD WALDECK LAW GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO



Meeting Minutes

Those present included paralegals Trisha Murray of the Montrose County Attorney's Office; Kris Evers of Chris Mahre & Associates; Brenda Stratton, Misty Hendrix, Cara Erickson, Pam Johnson and Linda Whipple of Dufford Waldeck Law; Kathy Begg, Olga Vorobieva, and Angela Classen, CLA, of Hoskin Farina & Kampf, P.C.; and Theresa Yoder of Tammy Tallant Law. Paula Moore, Secretary, was unable to attend the meeting due to work commitments, and Angela Classen agreed to act as Secretary for this meeting. The guest speaker, Jackie English, attended but did not remain for the business portion of the meeting, which was held following her educational presentation.

Educational Segment: Jackie English, Firm Administrator at Dufford Waldeck Law, presented her topic entitled "How Paralegals Can Affect the Bottom Line." Jackie has been the Firm Administrator at Dufford Waldeck for the past six years. She's responsible for managing all business operations within the firm, including supervising 10 paralegals and staff, managing all financial matters like billing, budgeting, receivables, strategic planning, marketing, IT, payroll, building management, etc. Prior to joining Dufford Waldeck, Jackie was an entrepreneur and owned her own legal recruiting business for 14 years. During the 80s and 90s, Jackie worked in the US WEST law department, working her way up from a contract legal secretary to Director of Legal Services supervising over 50 employees. While working at US WEST she went to night school and received two masters' degrees in Applied Communication and an MBA.

As a paralegal, you may believe it isn't necessary to know how a law firm operates. Jackie says "Not so! It is very important for you to have an understanding of the mechanics of how your firm operates, how certain management decisions are made, and why."

First, you have to understand how your firm makes money. Five major factors affect a firm's profitability:

1. **Leverage:** ratio of paralegals and associates to partners
2. **Utilization:** total number of billable hours entered by attorneys and paralegals
3. **Realization:** efficiency at which a firm converts billable time into fees collected
4. **Billing rates:** hourly rates charged
5. **Margin:** firm's net income (income minus expenses)

Effectively utilizing paralegals increases firm profitability. Effectively utilizing paralegals can decrease legal fees which makes clients happy and a firm more competitive.

Why is profitability important? Partners are happier (and easier to work with). Running a business is stressful and more income helps firm administrators relax as well. Job stability for everyone is integrally tied to profitability. Additional profits could mean improvements, such as better equipment, software, etc. It could also increase your compensation and bonus possibilities.

How can firm profitability be improved? When attorneys aren't doing work that paralegals can handle. The more efficient paralegals are at billable work, the more the attorney will rely on them. The more accurately paralegals record billable time, the more income will be generated for the firm. The more income paralegals generate for the firm, the more valuable they become to the firm.

Ideas to retain the best paralegals include treating them as knowledgeable team members. Allow them to con-

tribute to group decisions and participate in client meetings. Provide career path and professional development opportunities. Encourage them to provide feedback on office procedures, case management and working with other attorneys.

In addition to the points touched on previously, how else can paralegals improve profitability?

1. **Become a brand ambassador.** This simply means to speak positively about the firm to people you meet in the community. You never know where you might meet a potential client.
2. **Be involved in your community.** Paralegals can support causes and volunteer to help in community activities. There are numerous opportunities to volunteer while getting the firm name out there.
3. **Be great.** Impress existing clients with competent, patient and friendly interactions and professionalism. These all impact a firm's reputation. Take pride in your job and do your best which will convince clients to continue working with your firm.
4. **Assist with marketing efforts.** Attorneys are constantly under pressure to develop new business for the firm. But perhaps you have new ideas, such as a client appreciation event. Share these ideas with your attorneys.

5. **Create valuable web content.** Modern websites need more than pictures of attorneys and their buildings. Websites need a flow of valuable content. Paralegals keep track of important changes in the law. Paralegals could create short summaries of these changes and post on the firm website. This allows the firm to communicate significant changes to clients via the website. Paralegals also read interesting articles, which they could share.

MEETING MINUTES 2/26/20 (CONTINUED)

Jackie's presentation was both informative and humorous, peppered with selected cartoons to which we all could relate! She also provided some nice snacks and drinks. Thank you, Jackie!

Business Meeting: The minutes of the last meeting, which was held September 25, 2019, were not available for review and will be provided at a later date for review and approval.

The Treasurer's report was also unavailable and will also be provided at a later date.

Someone wondered if a member directory could be created which would reflect the practice areas or specialty of

our members. This can be discussed in more detail at another meeting.

Discussion was held regarding speakers for the upcoming year. Trisha suggested we contact Sue Hansen, who is a motivational speaker and also a Montrose County Commissioner. She will talk with Kirsten Humble and see if Sue is available to speak.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 20, 2020, in Montrose. Trisha and/or Kirsten will check on speaker availability and get back to us, and we will firm up meeting arrangements at that time, with notice being e-mailed to members and published in the newsletter.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted this 21st day of October, 2020.

Angela Classen

Angela Classen, CLA

Secretary Pro Tem

MINUTES OF LAWS MEETING SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

(VIA CONFERENCE CALL DUE TO PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS)

1) **Those present** on the conference call included Paralegals/NALA Liaison and Vice President, Penny Landeis and Kathy Begg of Hoskin Farina & Kampf (HFK), respectively; Paralegal and LAWS Treasurer Jennifer LeBlanc Hemond of the Masters Law Firm in Montrose; Paralegal Krista Ficco of Ouray; and Paralegal/LAWS Secretary Paula Illian Moore of Kain & Burke (K&B). No guest speaker was scheduled for this meeting, which was called for the primary purpose of touching base and electing new officers since we are without a President currently.

Member Angela Classen was unable to attend today but it was reported

that she will prepare and distribute a LAWS newsletter following the distribution of today's meeting minutes.

Member Poppy Sukthon has taken a new job in Thailand and no longer works at HFK. Paralegal Sherrie Case was recently hired and will be asked to participate in LAWS. Another new hire by the name of Kristy Keim also will be asked to participate once she comes on board at HFK on October 12. Member Olga Vorobieva of HFK has recently retired. Members Rob Jones and Kris Evers anticipated participating in today's meeting but were absent, hopefully, simply due to other demands on their time.

2) **Educational Segment:** There was no educational speaker scheduled for today. Only one other LAWS meeting was held in 2020 due to the onslaught of the novel coronavirus pandemic. Thus, our group, like many others, was derailed a bit.

3) **Business Meeting:** Paula's meeting minutes from our last meeting were unavailable today. She will submit them to the group via email soon.

MEETING MINUTES 9/30/20 (CONTINUED)

Kathy stated that although Rob resigned as LAWS' President, he intends to remain a member.

Tentative future meeting dates in 2021 were selected and agreed upon as follows:

03/10/2021 at 4 PM via Microsoft TEAMS or ZOOM;

06/16/2021 at 4 PM;

08/18/2021 at 4 PM; and

10/20/2021 at 4 PM.

The first meeting will be held via ZOOM or Microsoft TEAMS, to be determined later. The location and manner of the remaining three meetings will be determined as the pandemic progresses.

Treasurer Jennifer updated the group with an informal financial report. Present account balance is \$278.47. Jennifer will soon file our Annual Report with the Secretary of State, which will require a \$10 fee be paid. Our sympathy gift to Olga cost \$81.31; \$250 was paid out as NALA dues. No speaker gifts were necessary or purchased in 2020. In summary, \$610 was collected in dues this year, and approximately \$627 was paid out for expenses, including a \$149 fee for our website renewal. That renewal fee is typically due in December, and Angela lets Jennifer know when she receives a notice/invoice for its renewal.

A discussion was held concerning a possible reduction of our annual dues to half the amount for the year 2020 since we were mostly inactive. Ultimately, it was decided by all that we would keep the dues at its current rate (\$40/member). In early October, Jennifer will send out invoices for this fiscal year's dues.

Our Bylaws were consulted regarding timing of the election of officers. We committed to paying closer attention to the Bylaws in 2021 when it is time to prepare a slate and elect new officers.

LAWS officers were nominated, voted upon, and elected as follows:

Penny Landeis, President and NALA Liaison

Kathy Begg & Krista Ficco, Co-Vice Presidents

Jennifer LeBlanc Hemond, Treasurer

Paula Illian Moore, Secretary

Angela Classen, Newsletter

It was discussed and agreed that these appointments will go into effect as of today, September 30, 2020.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5 PM.

Respectfully submitted this 1st day of October, 2020.

Paula Illian Moore

Paula Illian Moore

Secretary

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Legal Assistants of the Western Slope (LAWS) was established to create and maintain good fellowship among association members, the National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc. (NALA), and members of the legal community.

LAWS is an affiliated association of NALA.

LAWS is dedicated to offering educational opportunities to legal support staff. Presentations offered during our meetings are designed to give our members new information and resources in the fast-paced, rapidly changing environment that impact our growth.