DRAFT

MINUTES
STATE BAR OF TEXAS
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Thursday, January 9, 2025 – 10:00 a.m. CST

Texas Law Center – Stewart Morris Board Room
1414 Colorado St.
Austin, TX 78701

A. **Call to Order at 10:01 a.m. CST from President Steve Benesh**
President Benesh called the meeting to order. The presiding officer was present, and members of the Executive Committee attended virtually.

B. **Roll Call from Executive Director Trey Apffel**
***Present*:**
Executive Director Trey Apffel*, President-elect Steve Benesh, Judge Jerry Bullard*, Elizabeth Sandoval Cantu, Jeff Cochran, General Counsel Ross Fischer*, Britney Harrison, Matthew Hill, Forrest Huddleston, TYLA President Hisham Masri, Lawrence Morales II, TYLA Immediate Past President Laura Pratt, Shannon Quadros, John Sloan, Chair of the Board Paul Stafford, Immediate Past President Cindy Tisdale, Aaron Tobin, President-elect Santos Vargas, Immediate Past Chair of the Board Kennon Lily Wooten*, Justice Evan Young*

Excused Absence:
Senior Justice Debra Lehrmann*
**Nonvoting member*

C. **Remarks from the General Public**
Members of the public were given the opportunity to comment during the meeting. There were no comments from the public.

D. **Report from Executive Director Trey Apffel**
Executive Director Apffel provided a general report including the upcoming 2025 State Bar Annual Meeting taking place in San Antonio June 19-20, an update on vLex Fastcase, and the launch of the new Texas Bar CLE website.

E. **Report from President Steve Benesh**
President Benesh provided an overview on meetings and activities since the last meeting, the upcoming free CLE, Updates for Solo Practitioners and Small Firms, to be held in Austin on January 23, and the progress of the State Bar of Texas website redesign.

President Steve Benesh called for a motion to approve the September 5, 2024, Executive Committee meeting minutes. Director Laura Pratt made the motion. Seconded by Director Forrest Huddleston. No discussion; motion carried.

F. **Report from Chair of the Board Paul Stafford**
Chair of the Board Paul Stafford provided a general report on communication efforts by directors in their districts. Chair Stafford announced receipt of letters of intent from 6 second-year directors for the 2025-26 Chair of the Board. The directors are Britney Harrison, Krisi Kastl, Rudy Metayer, Rosalind Perez, Shannon Quadros, and Michael Wynne.

G. **Report from President-elect Santos Vargas**
President-elect Santos Vargas provided a report on the proposed 2025-26 budget.

President-elect Vargas made the motion for approval of the SBOT 2025-26 proposed budget for publication in the *Texas Bar Journal*. Coming from a committee, no second was needed. No discussion; motion carried.

H. **Report from Immediate Past President Cindy Tisdale**
Immediate Past President Cindy Tisdale reported on the presentation of a State Bar Presidential Commendation to Judge L. Clifford Davis in Fort Worth during his 100th birthday celebration. Immediate Past President Tisdale also provided an update on BetterHelp.

I. **Executive Committee**
Nominations & Elections Subcommittee
Immediate Past Chair Kennon Lily Wooten provided an update on potential president-elect candidate interviews with five attorneys held on December 13 by the Nominations & Elections Subcommittee. After interviews, the subcommittee voted to select Deborah L. Cordova of Edinburg and G. David Smith of Rockwall.

Immediate Past Chair Wooten made the motion for approval of the recommendation of nominees for the 2025-26 SBOT president-elect candidacy of Deborah Cordova of Edinburg and G. David Smith of Rockwall. Coming from a committee, no second was needed. No discussion; motion carried.

Immediate Past Chair Wooten advised the Executive Committee that the 2025 election would be changed to electronic voting only, with all State Bar members receiving a postcard with information on the online voting process, in compliance with the Supreme Court's direction.

J. **Executive Committee**
Policy Manual Subcommittee
Director Matthew Hill provided a report on a change to the Policy Manual in Section 7.03.8(c)(3).

Director Matthew Hill made the motion for approval of increasing the CLE speaker meal reimbursement maximum in Section 7.03.8(c)(3) from $40 to $60. Coming from a committee, no second was needed. No discussion; motion carried.

K. **Audit & Finance Committee**
Director Forrest Huddleston provided an update on financial reports and general review of financial statements, internal audits, and the financial audit for fiscal year ending May 31, 2024.

L. **Minimum Continuing Legal Education Committee**
Stuart Colburn, Chair of the Minimum Continuing Legal Education Committee, provided a report on a change to Section 2.1.2 of the Texas MCLE Regulations and a title change to a required course in Section 1.3. Chair Colburn then called for approval on the two action items from the Minimum Continuing Legal Education Committee.

President Steve Benesh called for a motion and a second to approve the MCLE Committee's recommendation to change Section 2.1.2 of the Texas MCLE Regulations on accredited CLE activities to include credit for attorneys participating in arbitration, alternative dispute resolution, mediation, transactional, client counseling and negotiation competitions. Director Shannon Quadros made the motion. Seconded by Director Aaron Tobin. No discussion; motion carried.

President Steve Benesh called for a motion and a second to approve the MCLE Committee's recommendation to change Section 1.3 of the Texas MCLE Regulations to change the title of the Texas Center for Legal Ethics required course from "The Guide to the Basics of Law Practice," to the current title of "The Justice James A. Baker Guide to Ethics and Professionalism." Director Aaron Tobin made the motion. Seconded by Director Forrest Huddleston. Discussion ensued; motion carried.

M. **Ad Hoc Committee to Select At-Large Directors**
Director Elizabeth Sandoval Cantu provided a report on the upcoming interviews of the six nomination packets received for the two positions that will be open at the Annual Meeting in June 2025. Interviews will be taking place in February 2025. After interviews are completed, the committee will recommend four nominees to President Steve Benesh for consideration and of those four, he will select two nominees to be submitted to the Board of Directors for consideration at the April board meeting.

N. **Section Representatives to the Board Committee**
Judge Jerry Bullard provided an update on the Council of Chairs to be held on February 21, 2025, where two new Section Representatives to the Board will be elected, one from a large section and one from a medium section. Nominations for the positions will close on February 3, 2025.

O. **Supreme Court Liaison**
Senior Justice Debra Lehrmann had an excused absence. Justice Evan Young provided an update on the new Chief Justice, Jimmy Blacklock and the new Justice, James P. Sullivan.

P. **Texas Young Lawyers Association**
TYLA President Hisham Masri provided a general report on travels and projects.

Q. **General Counsel**
General Counsel Ross Fischer provided a general report.

R. **Chief Legal Counsel**
Chief Legal Counsel Chris Ritter provided a general report on communication review processes during the open session.

1. President Steve Benesh recessed the open session and reconvened in closed session at 11:19 a.m. as authorized by Texas Government Code Section 551.071 for the purpose of consulting with legal counsel regarding *Boudreaux v. Louisiana State Bar Association*, 86 F.4th 620 (5th Cir. 2023), *Alford v. State Bar of Texas* (No. 4:24-cv-01679) (S.D. Tex.); *Turnbull v. Commission for Lawyer Discipline, et al*. (No. 24-50260) (5th Cir.) and (No. 15-24-00095-CV) (15th Court of Appeals); *Robins v. State Bar of Texas, et al.* (No. 202418660) (129th District Court, Harris County); *Philip Ireland v. State Bar of Texas et al*. (No CV22279) (Freestone County, Tex.); *Winningham v. SBOT, et. al*. (No. 4:24-cv-881-O-BP)(N.D. Tex.); and *Jacob Barreras v. State Bar of Texas* (No. 3:24-cv-00302-MJT) (W.D. Tex.), and legal matters related to 1415 Lavaca; and as authorized by Texas Government Code Section 551.074 to deliberate regarding personnel matter(s).

2. President Steve Benesh reconvened the open session at 11:33 a.m.

3. During the closed session, only matters relating to consultation with legal counsel regarding *Boudreaux v. Louisiana State Bar Association*, 86 F.4th 620 (5th Cir. 2023), *Alford v. State Bar of Texas* (No. 4:24-cv-01679) (S.D. Tex.); *Turnbull v. Commission for Lawyer Discipline, et al*. (No. 24-50260) (5th Cir.) and (No. 15-24-00095-CV) (15th Court of Appeals); *Robins v. State Bar of Texas, et al.* (No. 202418660) (129th District Court, Harris County); *Philip Ireland v. State Bar of Texas et al*. (No CV22279) (Freestone County, Tex.); *Winningham v. SBOT, et. al*. (No. 4:24-cv-881-O-BP)(N.D. Tex.); and *Jacob Barreras v. State Bar of Texas* (No. 3:24-cv-00302-MJT) (W.D. Tex.) were discussed. No action was taken in closed session.

S. **There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by President Steve Benesh at 11:35 a.m. CST.**