

NEW HAMPSHIRE BAR ASSOCIATION  
SPECIAL BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING  
Wednesday, August 6, 2025  
4:00  
**Virtual**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Present for all or part of the meeting:

**Board Members:**

President Derek Lick, President-Elect Robert Lucic, Oliver Bloom, Gar Chiang, Caroline Epperson, Kristin Fields, Geoffrey Galagher, Leonard Harden, Tony Naro, Kyle Robidas, Barry Schuster, Cathy Shanelaris, James Shepard, Matthew Stachowske, Vanessa Williams, William Woodbury

**NHBA Staff:** Sarah Blodgett, Debbie Hawkins, Holly Chandler

**ABA Delegates:** Michael Iacopino

Unless otherwise noted, all motions reported are deemed to have been appropriately proposed, seconded, and voted upon by those present.

**4:00 PM**

A. Call to Order

Derek Lick

President Lick called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. He stated the main purpose for the meeting was to review and act on the proposed draft judicial screening procedure prepared by the Board subcommittee. It is expected that there will be a judicial nomination put forth by the Governor next week.

Executive Director Blodgett had a few announcements for the Board. She introduced and welcomed new board members, Matt Stachowske, Caroline Epperson and Oliver Bloom.

She stated that the goal from this meeting is to have an approved judicial screening process, so the Board is using same procedure throughout the upcoming year.

She also noted that the Board Orientation is scheduled for September 26, and it may be necessary to do some regular Board business at the meeting. One such item is related to the CLE revenue for past year. Revenue from FY 2023 was mistakenly attributed to the wrong year (FY 2024). We intend to have our auditors available for questions during that discussion.

Executive Director Blodgett let the Board know that they are required to approve nominations to the Public Protection Fund Committee according to the Court Rule about it. There are several members up for reappointment this year. Once we have drafted the committee roster, we will be sending out an email request to vote on this committee's membership.

## **PRESENTATION / DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS**

### **B. Discussion and Approval of Proposed Draft Judicial Screening Procedure - **ACTION ITEM****

Tony Naro/Sarah Blodgett

Executive Director Blodgett Sarah spoke about the materials for today's meeting. Items distributed to the Board were the current judicial screening procedure, the draft screening procedure developed by the Board subcommittee (add names), and a redline version with Executive Director Blodgett and Executive Assistant Debbie Hawkin's suggested revisions. Sarah spoke generally about the redlines.

President Lick shared information with the Board about the committee appointment process, which he is currently working on. He is contemplating replacing several longstanding committee chairs to bring in new ideas and perspectives. President Lick explained that he would like to keep the longstanding chairs involved in the work of their committee for some transitioning and mentoring, but have others take over the chair role. He asked for thoughts from the Board.

Longtime Legislation Committee Chair and ABA Delegate Mike Iacopino spoke in support of this. . He is one of the chairs that will be replaced. There was general discussion about term limits for committee chairs. This could be added to the draft bylaw amendment that was presented to the Board at its May 15, 2025 meeting.

President Lick turned the meeting over to Board Judicial Screening Process(Name?) subcommittee Chair Tony Naro to walk the Board through the subcommittee's proposal. Chair Naro stated that the subcommittee members wanted to have one document with one procedure, consolidated from the various documents currently in use. The subcommittee also wanted to ensure the process was transparent for the nominees and members and that it included a mechanism for getting more feedback from membership. The most significant proposal is the elimination of the well-qualified rating. This would result in two possible ratings – qualified and not qualified. The subcommittee felt this will provide clarity for all involved. Additional changes include amending the letter to the Executive Council to include the rationale for the rating and posting this letter on NHBA's website. The proposal also includes an email message to members advising them of appointments and soliciting feedback, which could be provided anonymously.

The Board first discussed the proposed change to the rating system. ABA Delegate Mike Iacopino expressed that this is a standard concern, and the Board has discussed these many times over the years. The last update of the procedure contained the three ratings based on the ABA model. At the time, it was thought that the well-qualified rating was important. There was general discussion by additional members who advocated for keeping the three-tiered rating system.

Others advocated in favor of the revision. It was felt that it mirrors the options the Executive Councilors have and sends a clearer message to the councilors. It was pointed out that the two-tier rating system is what people are looking for, and the streamlined system is better. It was suggested that if anyone feels strongly about a candidate and wants to voice additional feedback, members could go to the Executive Council public hearing and state their position as an individual. It was also voiced that the two-tier system helps to maintain consistency and a more objective process, as the members of the Board change annually. Another point was made that the need to differentiate between qualified and well-qualified has created discord amongst Board members in the past, and these ratings have been subjective. Some expressed the opinion that keeping the three ratings could make the process appear political.

The next point discussed was about the content of the letter to the Governor. Subcommittee Chair Naro stated that

there is a fear of retribution, but he feels we must own the Board's choice and give a sufficient explanation as to why the Board found the nominee qualified or not qualified. Others agreed and thought that the process loses meaning if we do not include this information in the letter. There was discussion about timing and the logistics of providing this feedback in the letter given the compressed time frame. Chair Naro said that the Board trusts the Bar President to accurately reflect the discussion and finding of the Board and did not feel the entire Board needed to craft the letter. Others added that due to the objective nature and clear criteria for evaluation, adding this information to the letter would be straightforward. Another Board member expressed the opinion that the tough part is determining whether they are qualified or not and it should be easy for the Board to give a few bullet points from the discussion during the meeting for inclusion in the letter.

Executive Director Blodgett expressed her concern that the letter to the Governor is already a public document which the public can access, and trying to simplify or rephrase could be problematic and would give us a potential exposure. Members of the Board stated that we have criteria that are used and are well explained in the procedure. They think it should be a public document and putting it on the website adds to the transparency.

Another Board member added that they have received feedback from two Executive Councilors including an explanation in the letter would be helpful. It doesn't need to be lengthy. If the nominee is found qualified, the explanation can be brief, but if found not qualified it is more important to share information that led to this determination. There could be one or two things pulled out of the discussion. Other Board members expressed the opinion that explanations give gravitas to the recommendation. The Board's recommendations provide the most weight as the members have worked with the nominees. This function is important for the justice system of New Hampshire. Subcommittee Chair Naro stated that he feels the letter would prompt the Executive Council to dig into certain areas when questioning the nominee and making their decision.

Executive Director Sarah Blodgett questioned the need for a separate statement on the website. Board members responded that there doesn't need to be a separate statement posted on the website. The intention was to publish the letter to the Governor on the Bar's website.

Executive Director Blodgett questioned the need to post the letter on the NHBA website as it becomes public when it is submitted to the Executive Council. Subcommittee Chair Naro reiterated his opinion about the importance of the publication of the finding. He feels it should be posted on the website so it is easy for members to locate. It is about transparency and credibility. If Bar staffing is an issue, there can be a process that would work for the staff.

Bar President Derek Lick supports putting the reasons for the finding in the letter. He favors a modified version in the letter, which would include a brief explanation. He suggests getting rid of the timeline surrounding the posting of the letter or making it general, as the timing of the entire process is outside of our control. Executive Assistant Debbie Hawkins agrees that the timing can be problematic and should not be prescribed in the procedure.

There was a discussion about the current process and timing for the benefit of the new Board members.

President Lick asked for thoughts about contacting all members of the Bar by email inviting confidential feedback be sent to the Board. Executive Director Blodgett expressed that while she appreciates the value of inviting members to give feedback, she has concerns about staff resources needed to send the email and tabulate the feedback. Members of the subcommittee expressed that this was not their intent. The email sent to members would give them the list of the Board members and ask them to contact a member of the Board with their feedback. This would help them feel like the Board is working for them and give the Bar members the opportunity to be proactive. Executive Director Blodgett agreed that this suggestion was doable.

President Lick state that he will ask the Board to vote on the procedure with the modified concepts discussed today, and then Debbie and Sarah will send the revised policy to the Board for a vote by email.

There was general discussion about what location on the Board's website would be appropriate for sharing judicial nomination information. Using the current posting place on the bar's website, under the "About Us" section was discussed. This is probably where the information would be posted.

### **ACTION**

On motion that the board approve the Judicial Screening concepts as presented here today, with the amendment to clarify the following:

- The comments about the determination will be in the letter as prepared and drafted by the Bar President.
- The letter to the Governor will be posted as soon as practical with a goal of within 10 days.
- There will be two ratings of the nominees, qualified or not qualified.
- We will endeavor to send an email to the membership and encourage them to provide confidential feedback to the Board of Governors.

Motion passed on a vote of 14-2.

The revised draft will be circulated by email tomorrow for a vote.

President Lick thanked the Board for their time spent reviewing this procedure.

C. Adjournment – 5:22 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Deborah J. Hawkins for Cathy Shanelaris, Secretary

### **ADDENDUM TO MINUTES**

The judicial screening procedure was reviewed at the August 6, 2025 Special Board of Governors meeting. Those present approved the procedure with some conceptual changes. Executive Director Sarah Blodgett made those edits to the written procedure, and it was circulated to those present at that meeting and approved by email on August 11, 2025.