

Wyoming State Bar Board of Officers & Commissioners Meeting

January 23, 2026

UW Conference Center/Hilton Garden Inn

Laramie, Wyoming

In Attendance: P. Craig Silva, President; Alison O. Gee, President-Elect; Jennifer L. Kirk, Vice President; Kelly M. Neville, Treasurer; James T. Whiting, Past President; Christopher G. Humphrey, First Judicial District Commissioner; Kylie M. Waldrip, Second Judicial District Commissioner; Jason Petri, Third Judicial District Commissioner; Kevin K. Kessner, Fourth Judicial District Commissioner; Scott E. Kolpitcke, Fifth Judicial District Commissioner; Kyle A. Ferris, Sixth Judicial District Commissioner; Emily S. Madden, Seventh Judicial District Commissioner; Clayton M. Melinkovich, Ninth Judicial District Commissioner; Kayla A. Albertson, Chair, Young Lawyer Section; Sharon Wilkinson, Executive Director; Mark W. Gifford, Bar Counsel and Cathy Duncil, Admissions Director

Absent: Anne K. Wasserburger, Eighth Judicial District Commissioner

Guests: Robert Dahill, Partner, McGee, Hearne & Paiz, LLC
Cason Swinn, Financial Advisor, RBC Wealth Management
Julie Hill, Dean of the University of Wyoming College of Law

President P. Craig Silva called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, January 23, 2026.

Annual Audit Report

Robert Dahill, a partner at McGee, Hearne & Paiz, LLC, joined the meeting to present the annual audit report. He referenced the financial report that the Board had already received and reported that his firm has issued a clean, unmodified opinion. He provided an overview of the process they use for the audit. He also reminded the Board that since the Bar participates in the Wyoming Retirement System, there are disclosures that must be included about the pension liability. He shared that, with the exception of the investments, things stayed fairly consistent with previous years. He reported that there was a large change in accounts payable due to the late arrival of Little America bill for 2024 Annual Meeting expenses.

Mr. Dahill reported that there was a new government accounting standard implemented this year regarding employees compensated absences but shared that it did not have much of an effect on the financial statements. He also reported that there are two new standards related to disclosure of capital assets which will be implemented in next year's audit and mentioned that the Board should expect a slight change to what next year's financial statements will look like.

Mr. Dahill reported that during the audit, they are required to review the financial reporting framework; however, they do not provide an opinion on it. He was pleased to report that, consistent with prior years, there are no concerns for him to report. He shared that there are good internal controls in place and his team did not experience any difficulties or disagreements with management. He thanked Cathy Duncil, Bookkeeper, and Sharon Wilkinson for always being so prepared and easy to work with and mentioned that all information is available when requested.

President Silva asked Mr. Dahill if there was anything he wished to discuss with the Board without the staff present. Mr. Dahill indicated that was not necessary.

President-Elect Alison Gee made a motion to approve the audit report. Treasurer Kelly Neville seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Annual Investment Report

Cason Swinn from RBC Wealth Management joined the meeting and reported that 2025 was a good year for the Bar's investment portfolio. He provided an overview of some of the key points that impacted the market last year—tariffs, precious metals surge, the technology sector continued to dominate and geopolitical demands, to name a few.

Mr. Swinn provided an overview of the Bar's investment portfolio and shared that the Bar's total return after costs in 2025 was 9.77%. He then provided an overview of the Bar's asset classes according to the Investment Policy Statement.

Treasurer Neville asked Mr. Swinn if he feels like the Bar's asset classes are appropriate for our type of organization. Mr. Swinn indicated that he has pitched a proposal for some changes to Sharon Wilkinson, Executive Director, for her to discuss with the Investment Committee. He would like to make those changes in the first quarter of this year.

President-Elect Gee reminded the Board that for the first time, the Board made the decision last year to spend some of the investment money.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Vice President Jennifer Kirk made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Kevin Kessner seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Neville thanked the staff for the great audit report. She reported that the license fee cycle wrapped up last month and in compliance with the CLE Rules, the \$300 delinquency fee was assessed to all those members not compliant with their 2025 CLE requirements.

Admission Report

Cathy Duncil reminded the Board that the Supreme Court adopted the NextGen Bar Exam and Wyoming will first administer that in July 2027. She reported that she participated in beta testing for the new exam in Miami a few weeks ago. She shared that to date, 48 jurisdictions

have committed to NextGen. Ms. Duncil provided an overview of the new exam and shared that the Board of Law Examiners will have to learn the new grading platform.

Cathy Duncil shared that the February bar exam will take place February 24-25th in Cheyenne and currently she has 22 applicants scheduled to sit for the exam—half of those being new applicants.

President Silva asked if there was a specific course being offered to help students study for the NextGen exam. Ms. Duncil shared that she is not aware of a specific course, but she encourages all applicants to take advantage of the numerous study resources available on the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) website.

Mandatory Continuing Legal Education

Executive Director Sharon Wilkinson reported as of January 16, 2026, that there were 180 members not compliant with their 2025 CLE requirements. As a result, they were each assessed the \$300 delinquency fee in compliance with Rule 10(a) of the CLE Rules. She shared that those members would have until March 1st to submit the required hours and pay the delinquency fee. Those who are not compliant after March 1st will be assessed an additional \$300 noncompliance fee and will be recommended for suspension to the Wyoming Supreme Court.

Office of Bar Counsel Report

Mark Gifford shared that Brandon Booth, the current State Public Defender, has been hired as Deputy Bar Counsel and will begin April 1, 2026. He shared that the hiring committee was very impressed with Mr. Booth and Mr. Gifford thinks he will be a great addition to the team to the Office of Bar Counsel.

Mark Gifford reported that Judge Bluemel, the current State Delegate to the American Bar Association (ABA) is term limited and has encouraged Mr. Gifford to fill this vacancy. Mr. Gifford reported that with the Review and Oversight Committee's and the Executive Committee's approval, he has taken the steps to get the required signatures to step into that role and he is excited to join Wyoming's impressive delegation.

Mark Gifford shared that he did not have anything to add to the written report before the Board today. Treasurer Neville asked Mr. Gifford if he was aware of any progress Special Bar Counsel was making on the Andrea Richard disciplinary case. Mr. Gifford explained that he is walled off of that case entirely. Executive Director Wilkinson shared that the last invoice was submitted in October for services completed August through October. President-Elect Gee asked if this Board should be inquiring about the status of that case. After discussion, the Board agreed that President Silva would touch base with John Masterson, member of the Review and Oversight Committee. Vice President Kirk asked if there were other cases on which the Bar is paying for Special Bar Counsel and Mr. Gifford indicated there are no other cases.

Mark Gifford was pleased to report that Cody Jerabek's law license was recently reinstated by the Supreme Court. He shared that Mr. Jerabek's has been instrumental in winding down a

deceased lawyer's practice and trust account. He also reported that Mr. Jerabek has been assisting with unauthorized practice of law cases.

Ratification of Executive Committee's Revisions to Officers and Commissioners Expense Reimbursement Policy

Executive Director Wilkinson reminded the Board that it discussed the expense reimbursement policy with respect to the Western States Bar Conference taking place in Hawaii every other year. She reported that she misinterpreted the Board's direction from the November meeting and when she presented the draft policy changes to the Executive Committee, it clarified that the Board's intent was to reflect the policy changes to not only the Western States Bar Conference in Hawaii years, but to all years and to include the Jackrabbit Bar Conference as well. As a result, she shared that what was before the Board today was a policy to allow for six members of the Board (in the specified order) to attend any of these conferences and be reimbursed expenses no matter where they take place. She asked for the Board to ratify the approval of the Executive Committee.

President-Elect Gee made a motion to ratify the approval of the updated Officers and Commissioners Expense Reimbursement Policy. Vice President Kirk seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2025-2027 Strategic Plan Progress Report

Executive Director Wilkinson shared that this is the first progress report the Board has seen since the implementation of the new Strategic Plan and she reported that she was pleased to see progress already being made. She asked the Board members to let her know if there is anything going on in their communities to further implement the Bar's goals and initiatives.

Vice President Kirk shared that in November Chief Justice Boomgaarden and Elisa Butler came to Basin to meet with their commissioners. She shared that there was an open house and Chief Justice Boomgaarden gave a talk about the role of an independent judiciary. At that same event, she discussed the history of the Big Horn County Courthouse and she thought both messages were well received.

President-Elect Gee shared that she met with Julie Hill, Dean of the University of Wyoming College of Law, Eric Barlow, a State Senator from Gillette, and David Fall, a member of the UW Board of Trustees from Gillette, to discuss the funding issues at the law school. She shared that Trustee Fall's comment to her was that it was not the law school's job to fix the lawyer shortage problem in Wyoming. President-Elect Gee shared that she sees it as everybody's problem.

Out-of-State Members Voting in Bar Elections

President-Elect Gee shared that there is a member of the Bar who is concerned with the fact that members who reside outside of Wyoming are allowed to vote in the Bar's elections—specifically for members on the Judicial Nominating Commission (JNC). This member's concern is that the JNC is a "liberal body of people who are putting forth the nominations going to the

Governor.” President-Elect Gee told this member that she would look into the governance of that, so she wished to discuss this with the Board to see if anything should be changed.

Executive Director Wilkinson shared that the Bylaws used to only allow resident members to vote in the Bar’s elections, but the Bylaws were updated years ago in reflection of the fact that all Active members pay the same license fee so all members should have the same voting rights.

Executive Director Wilkinson reported that the offices for which members are voting are the officers of the Bar, Judicial District Commissioners (only for those residing in that district), the Bar’s ABA delegates and the Judicial Nominating Commission.

After discussion, Treasurer Neville made a motion to amend the Bylaws of the Wyoming State Bar to reflect that only in-state members are eligible to vote for members of the Judicial Nominating Commission, the Bar’s ABA Delegate and the Bar’s Young Lawyer ABA Delegate. Vice President Kirk seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board directed Mark Gifford to draft the amendment and include this as an item of discussion for the April meeting.

Amendments to WRPC Rule 6.1(b)

Mark Gifford referenced this morning’s Access to Justice Summit that was taking place over at the law school and mentioned that encouraging lawyers to get more involved in pro bono work is one of the many things being discussed to help with the access to justice crisis. As a result, he has worked closely with Walter Eggers to propose some amendments to Rule 6.1— Pro bono public service. He requested approval to put these amendments out for member comment.

Commissioner Kessner made a motion to put the proposed amendments to WRPC Rule 6.1(b) out for member comment. Commissioner Scott Kolpitcke seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Judicial Nominating Commission Survey Results

Executive Director Wilkinson reminded the Board that Chief Justice Boomgaarden, on behalf of the Judicial Nominating Commission (JNC), asked her to distribute a survey to the membership. She shared that when the results were tallied, Chief Justice Boomgaarden requested a Zoom meeting with her and Mark Gifford. They met via Zoom earlier in the month to discuss the results and Chief Justice Boomgaarden encouraged Executive Director Wilkinson to share the results with the Board to see if it any additional feedback.

Vice President Kirk shared that the discussion in her area of the state reveals a conception that lawyers just need to be persistent when applying for judicial vacancies as those who apply multiple times eventually get appointed.

Commissioner Clayton Melinkovich learned that when there is no member of the JNC in a judicial district where the judicial vacancy is, a non-voting advisor is appointed. Executive Director Wilkinson explained that when that happens, she receives a letter from the Chief Justice requesting that the Bar appoint a lawyer to serve as the non-voting advisor. Executive Director Wilkinson then works with the sitting Bar President to see whom he or she wishes to appoint. That advisor sits in on the candidate interviews but does not vote in the final selections. She shared that she reports back to the Chief Justice who has been appointed, but that information is not shared amongst the members in the judicial district. She wondered what the Chief Justice and the members of the JNC would think of her getting word out about who the non-voting advisor was. That way, those lawyers could provide feedback to the non-voting advisor prior to the interviews. Commissioner Melinkovich wondered about notifying the members in that judicial district so they could express interest in serving as the non-voting advisor.

President's Report

President Silva shared that one of the things he was hoping to accomplish during his presidency was traveling to each judicial district. He shared that with the health issues concerning Marie Ellis, CLE Director, and the added burdens on the Bar staff, he has not pursued that.

President Silva shared that Executive Director Sharon Wilkinson was asked to draft an internal travel policy for the Executive Committee's consideration. President-Elect Gee shared that she felt it was helpful to have such a policy in place and discussed some of the conferences outlined in the draft policy. She wondered if Bar Counsel could benefit from certain conferences. Mark Gifford shared that early in his career as Bar Counsel, he attended the National Organization of Bar Counsel (NOBC) conferences, but he no longer finds those as beneficial as he once did; however, he did share that he does anticipate Brandon Booth, Deputy Bar Counsel, attending those.

President Silva shared that participation in these conferences has allowed Executive Director Wilkinson and Bar Counsel Gifford to stay apprised of mandatory bar issues and keep us at the top of our game. He really sees the benefit of having staff attend these conferences.

Treasurer Neville made a motion to approve the travel policy with the addition of the Bar Counsel conferences that Bar Counsel deems appropriate. Commissioner Kylie Waldrip seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

President-Elect's Report

President-Elect Gee reported that she has changed law firms. She reported now practicing with Yonkee & Toner in a newly opened Gillette office.

President-Elect Gee shared that she has been trying to support the Dean of the law school on some of her work. She also shared that the Public Defender's Office in Gillette is still really struggling. As a result, she would like to have some legislative ideas and has discussed bringing some attempts for loan forgiveness for public defenders with Senator Eric Barlow.

She is aware that the state has a similar program for physicians. She wondered if having a pilot program for a couple of years would be beneficial. She hears from many young lawyers across the state that they have a significant amount of debt and it makes it even harder to recruit young lawyers for the public defender jobs.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Kirk reported that she will be attending Bar Leadership Institute in March in Chicago and is looking forward to that. She also shared that she has been working with the Wyoming Business Council to start an access committee for Basin and Greybull. They are looking into bringing various things to those towns in order to encourage young people to move there. She shared that their local legislators have met with their county officials to discuss.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Wilkinson shared that she was obligated to recommend the suspension of 52 members for their failure to pay their 2025/2026 license fees. January 15th was the deadline to either pay or respond to the Court's Order to Show Cause. As a result, she reported that ten members were suspended from the practice of law.

Executive Director Wilkinson reminded the Board that it had recommended that the Supreme Court approve an increase to the 2026/2027 license fees for Active and Inactive members. She reported that she received a call from Chief Justice Boomgaarden earlier in the week with news that the Court has approved the increase. She also reported that she saw the Order from the Court in her email this morning. She reported that she will get word out to the members with plenty of notice before the October 1st license fee cycle launch.

University of Wyoming College of Law Update

Julie Hill, Dean of the University of Wyoming College of Law, joined the meeting. She reported that the law school enrolled the academically strongest class this past fall, and 40% of the class is made up of Wyoming residents. She reported that there were 70 LSAT taker in Wyoming last year and she expects that to decrease a bit.

Dean Hill reported that they admitted their first student to the 3+3 Accelerated Degree Program, which provides an opportunity for students to earn an undergraduate degree and a law degree in six years. She shared that the problem they are experiencing is getting students to take the LSAT and earn scores strong enough to admit them.

Dean Hill reported that the College of Law has hired two new faculty members. Grant Smith was hired to teach the Defender Aid Clinic and Mario Rampullo was hired to teach the Estate Planning Clinic and is also helping out with admissions and scholarships. She reported that starting in the fall of 2026 is Hillary Hoffman to teach Energy & Natural Resources/Public Lands. Eric Alston was also hired to teach Torts.

Dean Hill reported that their graduates' first-time pass rate for the July 2025 bar exam was 82%, which was up from the year before. She shared that they have revamped the program

students take as an intro to the bar exam that is taught in the last semester of law school. They have hired Mike Sims, Immediate Past President of BARBRI, and she thinks that is the reason the students did better on the exam.

Dean Hill reported that she has approached the UW Board of Trustees and requested a \$300 per student per semester allocation for use on Bar preparation. She shared that data suggests that 1/3 of the students do not take a Bar prep course prior to the exam. If allocated, this would provide the law school with a dashboard so they could see how the students are progressing and help identify the students that may be struggling. That way, they could address concerns sooner rather than later.

Vice President Kirk asked Dean Hill if she knows what BARBRI is doing to accommodate the NextGen bar exam. Dean Hill indicated that they are making necessary adjustments and will have the materials for NextGen ready to roll out. She shared that Themis is the other big provider and they are also working on that. She reported that she is under the impression that the approach is not that much different for studying purposes.

Dean Hill was pleased to report that the College of Law's legal writing program was ranked 17th in the country by *U.S. News & World Report* and the *Wyoming Law Review* was ranked by Adam Feldman, a legal expert, as 8th, just behind Harvard and ahead of Stanford. She also shared that last fall, they hosted the Wyoming Law Review Symposium with Wyoming author Chuck Box, and it was a big hit. She was pleased to report that the law school continues to be one of the most value accessible schools in legal education in the country.

Dean Hill shared that the academic units at the University are funded by the state legislature's block grant. The law school also charges tuition and does some private fundraising, but she noted that the fundraising is largely earmarked for specific things. She shared that while the block grant is portioned out the various units, the College of Law receives the lowest percentage of funding from the block grant—about 18%. She explained that part of the reason the College of Law receives this small percentage is because it keeps its tuition.

Dean Hill shared that the University conducted a faculty salary study to compare UW professors with other professors at other universities. She reported that the study revealed that the UW College of Law faculty is paid 65% of market. She shared that this is making it difficult for her to recruit and retain faculty.

As a college dean, Dean Hill shared that she is not allowed to lobby the Legislature. She encouraged the Board to talk to their legislators and members of the UW Board of Trustees to stress the importance of the law school and adequate funding.

President-Elect Gee shared that at some point, the state needs to determine if it wants to keep the law school. Dean Hill reported that Alaska is the only state that does not have a law school. She also shared that Nevada opened its law school around 2000 and they have data to show the impact that law school has had on the state.

Dean Hill shared that they are aiming for 85 students this year and that applications have drastically increased—about 120% over last year. She believes that one factor is the new building, but also, general interest in law school is up. She reported that the “Big Beautiful Bill” capped student loan borrowing, so that makes it difficult to forecast yield.

President-Elect Gee thanked Dean Hill for all of the information and shared that it is helpful to have as stewards of having a law school in Wyoming. She acknowledged that this was a very complex issue and asked Dean Hill what the Board could do to help.

Dean Hill shared that she would be in favor of a loan repayment program, but that would not fix her faculty problems. She shared that if the group has suggestions on how to fix this problem, she is open to suggestions.

President-Elect Gee asked if short-term funding would provide any assistance, or would the law school then become reliant on it? Dean Hill shared that she mostly needs people and that is hard to maintain on short-term funding. She reported that their fundraising has increased and she thanks those who have contributed. She reported being very pleased how the state of Wyoming has supported the law school in the last year, but she is unsure if that can be sustained.

Dean Hill shared that best practice would be to sit down with UW development people to identify the young alumni, mid-career people and people who have really done well to try to match them with specific gifts that would be meaningful to them. Unfortunately, she shared that she does not have that option and described how the partnership with the University of Wyoming Foundation works.

Commissioner Melinkovich asked Dean Hill what things, other than taking externs and interns in their law offices, the Board could do to help her. Dean Hill shared that she always needs lawyers to come and talk to the law students to discuss various aspects of their careers. For the larger problems, she shared that she wished she had better answers and solutions.

President-Elect Gee wondered if the law school could host some specific activities in conjunction with the tailgate parties so that the Bar could potentially assist with some expenses.

Treasurer Neville reminded the Board that the Bar hosts the Small, Solo & Rural Law Forum at the law school each spring and they have several attorneys attend in person. She encouraged Dean Hill to consider hosting a job fair or something similar so the attorneys could perhaps interview some students.

President Silva thanked Dean Hill for addressing the Board today.

ABA Delegate’s Report

Treasurer Neville, who also serves as the Bar’s ABA Delegate, reminded the Board that the Bar’s Keller Policy limits her on some of the issues that she can vote on in the House of

Delegates. More specifically, she can only vote on issues that are germane to the legal profession and the practice of law. She distributed the ABA Summary of Resolutions and reported that the House of Delegates will be taking these up for consideration during next month's Midyear Meeting in San Antonio. She mentioned a few on which she will refrain from voting and asked if there were any others the Board wished her to steer clear of.

She mentioned that the ABA always hosts its Annual Meeting in August, but the timing of that meeting does not line up with the Board's August meeting. As a result, she reported that prior to the August meeting, she plans to let the Executive Committee know from which resolutions she plans to abstain and see if they have any others.

Young Lawyer Section Report

Kayla Albertson, Chair of the Young Lawyer Section, reported that the section council is working on CLE proposals for the Annual Meeting. She also shared that she is going to be meeting with representation from the Estate Planning Section Council and President-Elect Alison Gee to co-sponsor a lunch-time CLE. The section council is also in communications with Cody Jerabek to introduce new lawyers to all of the resources WyLAP has to offer.

Commissioners' Reports

- *First Judicial District* – Commissioner Chris Humphrey shared that he is still having difficulty finding any bylaws for the Laramie County Bar Association, as there is still interest in reactivating the organization. Executive Director Wilkinson offered to see if any other county bars have bylaws.
- *Second Judicial District* – Commissioner Waldrip reported that both counties in her district had gone through FSX training.
- *Third Judicial District* – Commissioner Jason Petri shared that they also had FSX training. He also shared that the Lincoln County Bar Association met for the first time in a long time and both Judge Corpening and Judge-Select Deering were in attendance. He shared that they do not have bylaws so they elected an informal president. He shared that Judge Lavery is retiring in April and Judge Jones announced that he is resigning from the Circuit Court effective March.
- *Fourth Judicial District* – Commissioner Kessner shared that the Sheridan County Bar Association has typically been run by the young lawyers in town, but there has not been any activity since 2024. He shared that he has talked to some members of his firm about perhaps taking the lead on organizing something. He reported that he is going to make some effort over the next year to organize some things.
- *Fifth Judicial District* – Commissioner Kolpitcke shared that there is discussion about getting the Park County Bar Association active again. Vice President Kirk shared that Janci Baxter took over the finances for the bar.
- *Sixth Judicial District* – Commissioner Kyle Ferris reported that his county has had some legislative meetings with their local legislators and there has been good discussion. He shared that they lost a prosecutor and the criminal bar is holding on for dear life. As a result, he shared that they continue to refer to outside entities for

criminal defense in Circuit Court. He also shared that the Public Defender's Office lost another attorney.

- *Seventh Judicial District* – Commissioner Emily Madden shared that things are quiet in her district. They have a county bar meeting scheduled for February, and Brandon Booth, Deputy Bar Counsel, will be in attendance to do a CLE. She also reported that Joe MacGuire, a Casper lawyer and Natrona County GOP Chairman, will speak on the state of the Republican party in Natrona County.
- *Ninth Judicial District* – Commissioner Melinkovich shared that he hopes later on in the spring, he can make more frequent visits to the other counties in his judicial district.

Board/Committee Liaison Reports

- *Civil Pattern Jury Instructions Committee* – Commissioner Madden shared that Cody attorney Brienne Phillips took over as Chair of the committee and has done a great job. She reported that there will be a meeting in mid-February to discuss some proposed modifications to the instructions.
- *Continuing Legal Education Committee* – President Silva shared that he and Executive Director Wilkinson have been working on finding a keynote speaker for the Annual Meeting. He shared that he is working with representatives from the Gaming Commission on a CLE for the conference. He reported that Judge Skavdahl has recommended a judge on the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals as the keynote speaker, so Executive Director Wilkinson has followed up on that.
- *Criminal Pattern Jury Instructions Committee* – Commissioner Melinkovich shared that they meet each month and roll out new instructions periodically.
- *Juvenile Pattern Jury Instructions Committee* – no report
- *Law School Liaison Committee* – no report

President P. Craig Silva adjourned the meeting at 4:55 p.m. on Friday, January 23, 2026.

Minutes Submitted by:

Sharon Wilkinson
Executive Director