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Bar News - June 15, 2016

Bar Governance: Board Hears E-Filing Update, Approves Association Budget

By: Kristen Senz

NH Judicial Branch officials attended the May 19 meeting of the NH Bar Association Board of Governors to provide an update on the progress of the state's ambitious e-filing project, which aims to move all case types online over the next few years. The board also voted to approve the proposed association budget for fiscal year 2017, which began June 1.


Senior Circuit Court Administrator Gina Belmont joined Chris Keating, director of the Administrative Office of the Courts, and Superior Court Administrator Karen Gorham in appearing before the board. Belmont, who recently accepted a two-year assignment as director of the NH e-Court Project, explained that estate matters will be the next case type to move online – with a planned launch in spring 2017 – instead of Superior Court civil cases, as originally planned (For a more detailed e-Court update, see Belmont's article).

NH Bar President Mary Tenn said she would like the courts to think of the Bar Association Board as a resource for feedback on various aspects of the e-filing initiative. "Feel free to use us as a resource," she said.

Belmont thanked the board and said anyone with comments or suggestions about e-filing can contact her directly at the Trial Court Center.

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Also paying the board a visit in May was John Broderick, former NH Supreme Court chief justice and UNH Law dean. Broderick discussed the Campaign to Change Direction, a national public education initiative that seeks to raise awareness about the most common signs of mental illness. The campaign launched in New Hampshire last month (See Broderick's article on the campaign.). "What you're seeing is a symptom of an underlying problem, and it's everywhere," Broderick said, referring to the prevalence of mental health problems in American society today.

In other action, the Board of Governors voted unanimously to approve the proposed NH Bar Association budget for fiscal year 2017. The operating budget of \$4.2 million includes both NHBA and its affiliate, NH Pro Bono Referral System. The balanced budget increased 2.37 percent and reflects an expected net increase of 206 NHBA members. The largest revenue line is membership dues, which is 46 percent of total revenue budgeted, with 54 percent non-dues revenue. There were no significant changes from the previous year's budget. Some revenue and expense lines went up and others were reduced. Look for the complete Bar News budget article this summer.

The board also appointed Anthony Lenhart to represent Sullivan County on the NHBA Board of Governors. The seat was vacant due a lack of nominations and fewer than 10 write-in votes during the board election in April. According to the NHBA Constitution and Bylaws, the Board of Governors appoints a member to fill the seat for a one-year special term. The appointee may then run for a one-year term at the next election, in April 2017. These terms do not count toward the term limit of two, two-year terms for county governors.

NHBA Executive Director Jeannine McCoy updated the board on the extensive awareness campaign the association has conducted to familiarize Bar members with the new online member dashboard and consolidated deadline for attorney license renewal. The dashboard went live June 1, enabling members to pay dues and comply with other requirements from a single portal. The association hosted multiple workshops, sent a membership-wide mailing, and featured information about the dashboard in the weekly e-newsletter and in Bar News over several months. Many attorneys have so far reported that the new system makes compliance easier and more convenient.

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