



COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

October 28, 2021
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Presiding: Justice John C. Few

In attendance:

Members:

The Hon. John C. Few
Hannah Honeycutt
Charles Boykin
Margie Bright Matthews
Micah Caskey
Anne Caywood
Elizabeth Chambliss
Molly Day
Will Dillard
Betsy Goodale
Olivia Jones

Chris Koon
Tope Leyimu
Mary E.A. Lucas
Clarkson McDow
Al Parker
Aparna Polavarapu
Dawn Przirembel
Mary Sharp
Hon. Joseph Strickland
La'Jessica Stringfellow
Hon. John E. Waites

Guests:

Jason Bobertz
Bill McSorley, *SC Bar Paralegal Board*
Charmy Medlin, *SC Bar*
Katie Reams, *SC211 Services*
David Ross

Megan Seiner
Lucy Banks Smith
Dr. April Taylor, *SC Bar Paralegal Board*

1. Welcome and Introductions

Justice Few welcomed everyone to the commission meeting and introduced a new member, Charles Boykin. Mr. Boykin is the new representative from the board of South Carolina Legal Services.

2. Approval of June 24, 2021 Minutes

Chris Koon moved to approve the minutes from the Commission's June 24th meeting. Judge Waites seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. SC 211 - *Katie Reams*

Hannah introduced Katie Reams, who is the Community Impact Manager for [SC 211](#) at Trident United Way. SC 211 seeks to connect low-income people with all sorts of community services, including legal help. Hannah invited Katie to speak today in recognition of a broad access to justice movement that seeks to leverage community service providers to help make connections with people who have legal needs.

Katie gave an overview of the 211 network and shared some information from the SC211 Mid-Year Report. 211 is a nationwide service and covers about 96% of the country. All the local United Way organizations in South Carolina chip in to fund SC 211. If you pick up any phone and dial "2-1-1" anywhere in South Carolina, you will get a live person who will walk you through your situation and connect you with resources. People can also call on behalf of someone else. Examples of resources 211 can connect people with include rental assistance, substance use treatment, counseling, legal services, and many others. 211's sole purpose is to provide information and referrals regarding services provided on a free or sliding scale based on income. All phone calls are confidential and they do not collect any identifying information. SC 211 also has an app available in addition to their website and call line. It is available in the App Store.

4. Regulatory Reform: Non-Lawyer Licensing in SC - *Dr. April N. Taylor & Bill McSorley, SC Bar Board of Paralegal Certification*

Justice Few introduced the next topic, which initially came up through conversations with the Supreme Court's Commission on the Profession. This is an issue that is gaining momentum nationally, and Justice Few asked everyone to consider how we as a commission and as lawyers can use the information from the presentation to help deliver access to justice.

The speakers gave an overview of the SC Board of Paralegal Certification and the [SC Paralegal Certification Program](#) administered by the SC Bar. For some time, the board has been discussing how the state can expand the services that paralegals provide in South Carolina as a way to increase access to justice and bridge the justice gap. April and Bill gave an overview of initiatives in other states, including Utah, Arizona, California, Minnesota, Washington, and New Mexico. They spoke about the ethical implications in each of these states of expanding the role of paralegals and establishing new types of non-lawyer practitioners. They also pointed out that the ABA and the Conference of Chief Judges have encouraged exploration of these initiatives as an access to justice solution. The Board used the Commission's recently-released Justice Gap Report when considering this issue. April and Bill drew attention to several of the report's findings, including that family law, housing, and consumer finance are some of the highest-need problem

areas, many litigants appear in court unrepresented, and private attorneys are especially scarce outside of South Carolina's largest cities.

The Board is working on proposing several areas where paralegals could provide services directly to the public without the supervision of an attorney, including some specific tasks in the areas of probate, family, landlord-tenant, and corporate law. Many of the contemplated tasks involve assistance in filling out court-approved forms. The Board is in the early stages of considering each of these areas for potential expansion. They are very concerned with maintaining the integrity of the practice of law. Ethics, insurance, and ownership are other considerations that need to be considered fully.

The speakers invited suggestions for other areas that the Board could consider that would increase access to justice in our courtrooms. School proceedings like expulsion hearings that affect young people early in life were mentioned.

There was a discussion about forming a task force or working group consisting of a wide range of stakeholders to explore this issue further. A question came up about how the expansion of the paralegal role would increase access to justice. April and Bill offered that someone who may not be able to afford \$300 per hour in traditional attorneys fees might be able to afford \$50 per hour for help filling out forms, which increases access to legal help for that person. They also drew a comparison between their proposal and nurse practitioners in the medical field, emphasizing that it is really about cost and access to services for people who have a need but cannot access an attorney. There are also issues that are simply not worth an attorney's time; this new class of professionals could help fill that niche. There was also a discussion about standardizing these initiatives across states to ensure that the public understands who these new professionals are and what they might be able to do for them.

Justice Few asked for everyone to think about next steps and potential for exploring middle ground that would not intrude on the practice of law but would increase access to justice. He encouraged anyone who had further thoughts to get in touch with Hannah.

5. Executive Director Update - *Hannah Honeycutt*

Hannah began her update by thanking everyone who attended the Justice Gap launch event in September. Over 160 participants attended the event. If anyone was unable to attend, the [recording is now available](#) on the commission's website. She thanked everyone who has helped spread the word about the report through social media and word of mouth. Elizabeth Chambliss has given a presentation about the report at UofSC Law and has added the report to her class curriculum. Hannah has also given several presentations about the report, including at the Charleston School of Law 1L Pro Bono Orientation and was scheduled to give another later in the day to a Race & Reconciliation group in Rock Hill (facilitated by commission member Clarkson McDow). Hannah pointed out the increase in traffic to the commission's website since the release of the Justice Gap Report.

Hannah gave an update about the ongoing Legal Needs Assessment project, which began in August. The research is being conducted by the Center for Housing and Community Studies at

UNC Greensboro and is co-sponsored by the SCATJ Commission, the SC Bar, and the NMRS Center on Professionalism at UofSC Law. This is a yearlong project.

Hannah drew everyone's attention to the [Supreme Court Order](#) approving the commission's proposal for a pilot project to make CLE credit available to attorneys who volunteer for the Charleston Housing Court program. Everyone is very hopeful that the pilot will result in an increase in Housing Court volunteers.

Hannah continues to coordinate and nurture the SC Legal Service Provider Group, holding monthly meetings on Zoom and maintaining a listserv for its members. At recent meetings, they have hosted a speaker from SCLS on pandemic unemployment benefits, speakers from SC Housing who spoke about rental assistance, and most recently, the director of the North Carolina Equal Justice Alliance (a formal coalition of legal services providers in North Carolina) spoke about how their provider community is using their recently-released legal needs assessment to further their individual organizations' missions and goals.

Hannah highlighted several things that she has been featuring on the commission's social media pages and encouraged members to fill out the member spotlight survey she has sent around previously if they have not done so already.

6. Commission Member Engagement & Committee Formation - *Justice Few & Hannah Honeycutt*

Hannah introduced the next topic, explaining the new committee structure and how she decided on the topics each would focus on. She then assigned each committee to a breakout rooms so they could begin initial conversations about the direction of their work and who might be willing to serve as co-chairs. Hannah asked each committee to report back to her about plans for their next meetings and who they had selected as co-chairs.

The committee assignments are as follows:

Commission Development:

- Micah Caskey
- Larry Cunningham
- Chris Koon
- Tope Leyimu
- Andrea Loney
- Mary Lucas
- Dawn Przirembel
- Megan Seiner
- Mary Sharp
- Jeff Yungman

Outreach & Communications:

- Judge Addy
- Justin Bradley
- Charles Boykin

- Elizabeth Chambliss
- Judge Childs
- Will Dillard
- Betsy Goodale
- Anthony Livoti
- Margie Bright Matthews
- Clarkson McDow
- Aparna Polavarapu
- La'Jessica Stringfellow
- Richele Taylor

Self-Represented Litigants:

- Anne Caywood
- Molly Day
- Olivia Jones
- John Kassel
- Tonnya Kohn
- Judge Malphrus
- Brandy McBee
- Al Parker
- David Ross
- Judge Strickland
- Judge Waites

7. Future Meeting Dates - *Justice Few*

The next commission meeting will be held on Thursday, February 24, 2022. The meeting location and time will be announced closer to the date.

8. Other Business

No one brought forth any other business to discuss.

9. Adjourn

Justice Few thanked everyone for attending and encouraged all members to remain engaged with the commission's work. The meeting was adjourned.