Secretaries Session, Friday, September 15, 2017

Mary L. Smith, Moderator, Secretary, ABA

Mark Sessions, Panelist, Vice Chair, Lawyers Conference, Judicial Division

Tom Zych, Panelist, Secretary and Communications Officer, Section of Antitrust Law

Attendees: 12

All present introduced themselves after the panelists. Attendees were present representing the following entities: Antitrust staff, Energy, Environment, Family Law, GP Solo, Health Law, Intellectual Law, International Law, Judicial Division Staff, Litigation, Public Contract, and Senior Lawyers Division.

Zych: Antitrust Section Secretary and Communications Officer’s role was for one year but was changed to two years a couple years ago. This position keeps full records and Council meetings; and as Communications Officer, overseas communications function of Connect platform, Content Committee, publications, website, licenses, and oversight of the Membership & Diversity Committee.

Sessions: This role is a traditional role for secretary and there is no automatic ascension to higher positions. He participates on executive committee and takes notes.

Q: Who has other roles in addition to Secretary?
A: Antitrust has Secretary and Communications Officer; Health Law; Public Contract Law; Litigation has a Chief Diversity Officer combined with its Secretary.

Q: Tom, does Secretary ascend to Section Chair?

A: Only when you become vice chair and, you need to have served in two officer roles. The Nominating Committee looks at historical records for all nominees.

Q: Who has the Secretary position ascending to Chair?

A: Public Contract, Health Law, and GP Solo have ascension to Section Chair.

Q: Mark, how do you support the Chair?

A: Additional duties are dictated by each Chair. The position supports the officers and follows up on things.

A: (Tom): Officer roles are collegial. There is a joint planning meeting held during the Section Spring Meeting and our roles are clearly defined. We work closely with staff and surprised that members come out to a session such as this without their staff. We support staff and what they do.

Q: (to attendee): What are you hoping to get out of this session?

A: Last year I got a lot of ideas to help be a better secretary and what works and what doesn’t.

A: Antitrust Section has an Officers Best Practices for each officer position that helps to keep officers on track.

*Follow Up: Circulate copies of the Antitrust Section Officer’s Best Practices – provide to Mary L. Smith or Bridget Miller*
A: GP Solo Secretary also serves as Council Coordinator and delivers bad news, e.g., when a Council seat has been vacated due to too many missed Council meetings. The Secretary also serves as Chair of the Bylaws Committee.

Q: (from Audience): Are there forms from things, e.g. agenda format, etc.

A: Samples of minutes were distributed for this session, from Administrative Law and from the Section of Litigation. The Antitrust minutes and agenda are available on it leadership portal, as is Litigation.

Q: Who writes the minutes, volunteers or staff.

A: GP Solo uses staff. The Antitrust Secretary keeps detailed minutes. He creates a page for every item from the agenda, indicating action items and full description. Proposed minutes are circulated to Section Director and Chair.

Q: Is it important to record who make a motion and who seconds it?

A: Yes

It is difficult to keep up with who comes and goes during a Council meeting. Use a sign-in sheet.

Q: Mark, how do you take minutes?

A: Bombed the first time. Think of the audience. Really liked the Administrative Law sample minutes distributed, particularly the follow up column.

A: Antitrust Council takes action between Council meetings on Section comments. These are recorded in bullet format for the upcoming Council Meeting. We keep a vote tally sheet for all votes, listing who voted and how.
A: Senior Lawyers used to record and have minutes transcribed but found this not to be helpful at all. **Suggestion:** Reach out to a court reporting school that may be willing to send student interns to assist with taking minutes.

Q: Mark, how soon after a meeting do you finalize minutes and how long does it take?

A: It takes longer than it should. Learned how to use hyperlinks in the minutes to speakers. It does take a fair amount of time.

A: (from audience): I was told that the most important thing is to get the resolutions right and the attendance list right.

Comment: There is always the dilemma of how much detail to put into minutes. One person sent minutes out five (5) minutes after the meeting.

*Follow Up:* Circulate an electronic version of the samples minutes of the Administrative Law Section.

Q: (from audience): Did the ABA set up the leadership portal:

A: Litigation too has a leadership portal where they keep leadership information. The Antitrust Section has a public facing website, a leadership portal for leaders and the Connect portal for the Section. All email messages to out through Connect.

Q: What are your thoughts about bi-monthly calls for secretaries being combined with vice chairs, etc.?

A: **Those present favored having combined calls.** They preferred an informational call without too much discussion. It might be helpful to have minutes of the call. Tom Zych felt that more information is better than less and that working with staff is very valuable and important to keep officers up to speed on what is going on. The Environment,
Energy Section formed a task force to help with keeping up with what is going on through participation on the SOC officer calls. Carol from Senior Lawyers would appreciate bullet points without commentary that could be posted on the SOC website. The attendees appreciated the CLE calls in the beginning of the year but half-way through they became complaint sessions. Since Senior Lawyers lost most of their staff and their resources, it has been a hard hit for them and makes it tough. Seniors Lawyers minutes are expected to be circulated one week after the meeting.