

Bar Bulletin: Your JBA Board of Governors is committed and accountable

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By Charles Jimerson, JBA Board of Governors

This year concludes the second year of my first term as an elected representative of the Board of Governors for The Jacksonville Bar Association.

Its been an enriching experience.

For me, the service is a form of giving back to the legal community and an outlet to engage my peers in a way that fosters collegiality and promotes servant leadership.

Im looking forward to all of the progress and growth our organization is poised to make in the coming years and am hopeful I can continue to be a JBA leader.

As our board continues to develop our long-term strategic plan, it has forced the leadership to consider our roles and responsibilities.

Fundamentally, weve always viewed board members as the fiduciaries who steer the organization toward a sustainable future by adopting sound legal and ethical governance and financial management policies.

This year, more than ever, weve been confronting the question what exactly does that mean?

At our core, the board of is a working board.

Though all positions are voluntary and uncompensated, there is an expectation that all members of the board will put in a great amount of time, energy, and on occasion, financial resources to safeguard the prestige of the organization and chaperone the elevation of the profession.

Your board is a committed bunch, a group of leaders who stay true to what they said they were going to do long after the mood they said it in has left them.

Their commitments lead to actions and their actions bring the JBA closer to achieving its goals. Commitment and accountability are the baselines of what a JBA member should expect from their board.

But what exactly does that mean?

Commitment means determining the organizations mission and purpose.

The board has the ongoing responsibility of creating and reviewing the JBAs statement of mission and purpose in a way that articulates the organizations goals, means and primary constituents served.

Accountability is never losing sight of what weve determined to be most important to our membership.

We are charged with acting in the best interests of the association and supporting the mission, purposes, goals, policies and programs.

Our means are to approach the work in a spirit of cooperation, creativity, amiability, integrity and respect.

Historically, our board has supported expression of a wide range of ideas, all centered upon adding value to membership in our trade association.

Commitment for our board members has recently taken the form of effective organizational planning.

Accountability to the organizational planning includes:

Scrutiny of progress toward the JBAs stated goals

Self-evaluation of the performance of the board

Examination of external and internal environments of the JBA

Soliciting input from staff, committees, members and sister organizations as to strengths and weaknesses, wants and needs

Establishing and delegating organizational and operations oversight responsibilities to each board member

Adoption of and strict adherence to financial budgeting

Crafting and constantly refining our value proposition

Creating and effectively managing financial opportunities

Developing work plans and staffing detailed and specific organizational objectives

Redefining governance measures and norms for how work gets done and decisions are made by the board

Reporting on goals and achievements to the membership

Our group is committed to protecting assets and providing proper financial oversight of JBA resources, on as high a level as I have ever experienced on a board.

The group has developed rigid processes for assisting in the composition of the annual budget and is very accountable to ensuring that proper financial controls are in place.

Commitment to our board helps ensure the public standing of the lawyers in Jacksonville remains exemplary.

We have a statewide reputation for adhering to the highest legal standards and ethical norms. Our board is committed to enhancing that reputation and pushing our local Bar to always achieve the best for itself.

Accountability among board members is always raising our standards for ourselves and trusting that our peers will do likewise.

As a Bar, if we take care of our character, our collective reputation will take care of itself.

These days, people seem to be having success building reputations on what they are going to do. That is not how our organization was built and it is not how we will run things going forward.

I encourage you to evaluate and elect your board based on their actions, their commitment and their accountability. That's how we evaluate ourselves.

As members of the JBA, you are entitled to expect your elected board members to accept responsibility for their actions, be accountable for their results and take ownership of their mistakes.

Now I ask you, what exactly does that mean?

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