



WSAMA News

Volume 2003, No. 1

February 2003

2003 Spring Conference Edition

Where:

Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel, Vancouver, B.C.

When:

April 30 - May 2, 2003

Guaranteed Hotel Room Rate Cut-Off:

Monday, March 31, 2003

Hotel Reservation Toll-Free Number:

1-800-663-9255

The spring WSAMA conference will return to Canada for the first time in four years. Vancouver, B.C, received more votes than any other location on the west side of the mountains in our 2002 member survey as a preference for conference location. So WSAMA will be returning to the Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel, where we met in the spring of 1999.

In order to take advantage of the recreational opportunities in the city of Vancouver, we will vary our usual conference schedule somewhat and instead utilize a three half-day format. This means the first program session will be from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday afternoon, April 30. Then the program will continue from 8:00 a.m. to noon on Thursday, May 1, and there will be a luncheon from noon to 1:30 p.m. One of the most popular WSAMA speakers, Anne Bremner, will be the featured luncheon speaker. Then the rest of Thursday afternoon will be open for attendees to enjoy the city. The conference program will conclude on Friday morning with a session lasting from 8:00 a.m. to noon.

Conference Registration

All the materials needed to register for the 2003 Spring Conference are enclosed:

- Preliminary Agenda
- WSAMA Conference Registration Form
- Optional Golf Scramble Form
- Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel Information

Program Highlights

A variety of topics has been selected for this program, with an emphasis on some nuts and bolts topics. These will include telecommunications and regulating the right-of-way, bankruptcy as it affects the municipal lawyer, the new shorelines rules, use of interlocal agreements, and public disclosure.

There will be a criminal track as usual, which will be held on Thursday morning. The primary focus of this session will be a symposium on domestic violence. The topics will include use of the DV advocate, evidentiary aspects of prosecution, basics of motions in limine, voir dire, and opening and closing statements.

The interplay between the municipal court judge and the city administration is becoming the focus of a great deal of interest and, sometimes, contention. A committee, the Court Independence Response Team, has been formed by the Board for Judicial Administration to deal with these issues. The WSAMA representative on this committee is Michael Weight, City Attorney of Bothell, with Londi Lindell, City Attorney of Mercer Island, as an alternate. The committee is scheduled to meet for the first time in February. There will be a report from our representatives on this committee and review of this important topic on Wednesday afternoon.

There will be an update on the legislative session, which we hope will include a new annexation law to replace the direct petition method held unconstitutional by the state supreme court last year. In addition, updates will be provided on important recent cases in criminal, land use, and Indian law and a review of the recent case that invalidated the Sumner curfew ordinance.

The program was also planned so that a full year's ethics credits can be obtained at this conference if you attend the ethics roundtable. In addition to the roundtable, two ethics topics are included - ethical issues in dealing with the pro se defendant and advising municipal officials who enforce ethics codes that govern city employees and officers.

We have requested CLE approval for 10.75 credits total, which includes up to 2.25 hours of ethics if you attend the ethics

roundtable. Criminal justice reimbursement will be available for up to \$50 for those who meet the requirements of traveling at least fifty miles to attend the conference and staying overnight in a commercial facility.

See the preliminary agenda for the full list of topics and speakers!

Conference Social Highlights

As indicated, this conference will be held on a three half-day format: Wednesday afternoon from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Thursday morning from 8:00 a.m. to noon with a luncheon immediately following the meeting; and Friday morning from 8:00 a.m. to noon. There will be two receptions, one Wednesday evening with hosted hor d'oeuvres and a cash bar, and a fully hosted reception on Thursday evening courtesy of the following WSAMA associate members: Kenyon Dornay Marshall; Preston Gates & Ellis; Foster Pepper & Shefelman; and Ogden Murphy Wallace. Thanks to our sponsors for their support of WSAMA! There will be the usual continental breakfast on Thursday and full breakfast on Friday morning.

A highlight of the conference undoubtedly will be the luncheon Thursday, with featured speaker Anne Bremner, from Stafford Frey Cooper. Ms. Bremner has consistently been one of the most popular speakers at our conferences. In addition, recognition of the first recipients of the Outstanding Service Award will occur at the luncheon. The remainder of the afternoon will be free time to enjoy Vancouver.

The golf scramble will also be held on Thursday afternoon.

Hotel Reservations

The primary convention hotel will be the Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel in Vancouver, B.C. Attendees should make their own hotel reservations directly with the hotel. The toll free number for hotel reservations is 1-800-663-9255. Remember – make your reservations on or before March 31; after that date the hotel may release our block of rooms and the reduced room rate for the conference attendees will not be guaranteed.

The convention room rates are approximately \$130 U.S. a night for single or double occupancy. Be sure to indicate attendance at the WSAMA conference to obtain the listed room rates. These are discounted rates and the hotel will grant these rates for the Tuesday evening prior to the conference and for the weekend following the conference, if rooms are available. Hotel check-in time is 4:00 p.m. and check-out time is noon.

Also, any tax paid on the room, or on other purchases for that matter, is refundable for Americans. There will be information and appropriate forms in the conference packets for claiming this refund.

There is not a central daycare center at the Sheraton Wall Centre, but arrangements can be made with the hotel for babysitting services.

As an alternative hotel with somewhat lower room rates, we have also reserved a block of 40 rooms at the Century Plaza Hotel, which is located within one block of the Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel. The room rates at the Century Plaza Hotel are approximately \$90 U.S. a night for single/double occupancy for a studio suite, with slightly higher rates for a one bedroom suite. I did not have an opportunity to personally inspect the facilities at the Century Plaza Hotel, but it is a three star hotel. The phone number for reservations at the Century Plaza Hotel is 1-800-663-1818. They also will grant this discounted rate for the Tuesday night before the conference and the weekend following.

Amtrak Service

There is train service to Vancouver, B.C. from Seattle on Amtrak. The train station is approximately seven blocks from the hotel. There are five trains daily between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. at a cost of \$46 roundtrip. For more information, see the Amtrak web site at www.amtrak.com.

Outstanding Service Award Recipients

The Outstanding Service Award was established to honor municipal lawyers for their role in achieving the objectives of WSAMA through their dedicated efforts to one or more municipalities and/or WSAMA, thereby contributing to the solution of municipal legal problems in Washington State. This is a new award, so there have been no recipients in the past.

A number of nominations were received and the board of directors has chosen five individuals to receive this award in 2003: Mike Finkle, Seattle Law Department; Dan Heid, City Attorney of Auburn; Londi Lindell, City Attorney of Mercer Island; John Vanek, Asst. City Attorney of Olympia; and Sandy Watson, Seattle Law Department. These awards will be presented at the luncheon at the spring conference in Vancouver, B.C.

Congratulations to these recipients for their dedicated work on behalf of local governments in Washington State!

WSAMA Papers on Web and Proposed Dues Increase

One of the goals of the WSAMA board for a number of years has been to post the entire text of the papers from the WSAMA conferences on the Web in a searchable format for members to access. There have been concerns in the past about making these available for the general public, since neither the MRSC nor the WSAMA Website are password protected.

In cooperation with the Municipal Research and Services Center, a proposal has been developed that would allow a portion of the WSAMA Web page to be password protected for WSAMA member access only. WSAMA papers for the last five years or so would be scanned into electronic format and then posted on the Web site in a word- searchable format. All future papers will be added to the site to develop a comprehensive database on papers on municipal law topics for use by all WSAMA members.

There is some expense involved in scanning papers for this process and also for maintaining the Web site. Therefore, the board has approved a proposed dues increase as follows: Dues for the first WSAMA member in each city attorney office or firm would be increased from \$20 a year to \$30 a year; dues for additional WSAMA members from each city or firm would stay the same, that is \$10 a year; dues for associate members would be increased from \$35 a year to \$50 a year.

This is the first dues increase by WSAMA since 1998. As indicated, the primary impetus for this increase is the project to place WSAMA conference papers on the Web. However, there are other general administrative costs that are rising that also require a dues increase. The WSAMA board works very hard to keep our dues costs as low as possible and our conference costs affordable for all members.

The proposed dues increase will be voted on by members at the WSAMA business meeting at the spring conference in Vancouver, B.C., as required by the bylaws.

WSAMA Board Applications

There will be at least one vacancy on the WSAMA board of directors, beginning in April 2003. The term of office is two years. The primary function of the board is to help plan the spring and fall WSAMA conferences. Serving on the board does require the ability to attend four board meetings a year – an all-day meeting in January, an all-day meeting in July, and two lunch meetings following the spring and fall conferences. Reimbursement for necessary travel expenses is provided by WSAMA for the January and July board meetings.

The WSAMA board is very interested in having a board that represents all the WSAMA members. At the January 2001 board meeting, a Resolution on Diversity was adopted to embody the commitment of the board to provide an opportunity for all WSAMA members to participate in the activities of the organization through association with WSAMA board programs, committees, and board membership.

If you are interested in being considered for membership on the WSAMA board, send your name and the city you represent to Donita Mowers or Patrick Mason, at the address listed at the end of the newsletter.

Honorary Membership

If you have served as city or town attorney or assistant city or town attorney in the State of Washington for at least 25 years, then you are eligible for the WSAMA honorary membership award. If you qualify, or if you know of someone who qualifies, please contact Donita Mowers at the address or phone number listed at the end of the newsletter.

Law Week 2003

WSAMA continues to be very supportive of the Law Week program, which is sponsored by the Washington State Bar Association to bring public legal education into the classroom. The goal is to have a volunteer lawyer or judge in every school in Washington during the week of May 1 to teach students about specific areas of the law and discuss current legal issues.

Enclosed is an announcement from the Bar Association with more information about this program and also specific information about how you can participate in Law Week 2003.

Transitions

A long-time member of the city attorney family, Patrick Brock, has announced his retirement from the city of Tumwater, effective January 31, 2003. Although this is the official retirement date, Pat will continue to assist with the transition at Tumwater until May. Pat has served a number of municipalities as city attorney or assistant city attorney, including Vancouver, Richland, Bellingham, Castle Rock, and Kelso and currently also serves as Woodland city attorney. Pat is a past president of WSAMA, from 1985-86, and has made significant contributions to WSAMA activities and the field of municipal law for many years. Best wishes to Pat!

Questions??

If you have any questions concerning the WSAMA conference, please contact Donita Mowers or Patrick Mason at Municipal Research and Services Center:

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See you in Canada!

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