
CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

by Jean D. Mumm *

In his first Chair message, my predecessor, Grice McMullan, spoke of certain challenges facing the Real Property Section. These challenges have existed for years. Through the efforts of the fine leadership of the past Chairs of the Section and the countless hours of assistance the past Chairs have received from Section members, Virginia CLE, and the Virginia State Bar, we have made progress each year in meeting these challenges. My overall challenge as Chair of the Real Property Section for 2007-2008 is to continue the progress of my predecessors.

So, what is being done this year? I agree with Grice that the Section's primary goal and challenge is to maintain the proficiency of the lawyers who elect to be members of the Section. On the one hand, I am pleased to report that the Section currently has 2,058 members, an increase of approximately 150 members from the 2006-2007 year. On the other hand, this presents an increased challenge as we now have even more lawyers to which the Section owes an obligation. I believe education plays an important role in maintaining proficiency. Once again, the Real Property Section will co-sponsor with Virginia CLE an advanced real estate seminar, with lectures aimed at providing education to both the residential real estate practitioner and the commercial real estate practitioner. Details on the topics for this seminar are contained elsewhere in this issue of the FEE SIMPLE. In May, 2008, the 26th Annual Real Estate Practice Seminar will hit the road with stops in Norfolk, Richmond, Fairfax, and Roanoke. This seminar will include an overview of new real estate related legislation passed by the Virginia General Assembly during the 2008 session, as well as a case law update. Nancy Kern with Virginia CLE, and Randy Howard, the Section Vice-Chair, are planning this seminar. If you have any suggestions as to topics or speakers, please do not hesitate to contact Nancy, Randy, or me.

The opportunity to educate Section members is not limited to seminars. I would encourage each of you to attend one of our Section meetings. We are fortunate to have veteran real estate practitioners with varied practices in different parts of the Commonwealth routinely attend our Section meetings. While we do conduct a fair amount of Section business at these meetings, there always seems to be a lively discussion about real estate related cases that have appeared in *Lawyers Weekly* or an unusual case or situation that someone has encountered in their practice. It is very interesting to listen to how things are done in different parts of the Commonwealth. I never leave a meeting without learning something. Beginning with our Winter meeting in January, our Section Subcommittees will be asked to share with the group a practice tip that is related to their Subcommittee. This will provide an additional educational opportunity for those Section members attending the meeting.

The second challenge noted in Grice's message was the need to be involved in all new legislation pertaining to real property, within the bounds of what the Section is permitted to do by the Virginia State Bar. Each year, it has been a challenge to obtain copies of the proposed legislation prior to the eve of the expiration of the comment period and, if legislation is obtained with time to comment, to find the manpower available to review the proposed bills. We will take a stab at addressing this challenge at our Winter meeting, which is scheduled for January 18, 2008 at the William & Mary Law School. We will devote a substantial portion of our January meeting to a review of proposed real estate related legislation. Since the meeting is held the same weekend the VBA is meeting in Williamsburg, we will be inviting a representative of the Real Estate Section of the VBA to present to us the proposed legislation that impacts the practice of real estate in the Commonwealth, and engage in a discussion regarding the proposed legislation. Admittedly, it is a small step in tackling an otherwise overwhelming challenge, but one that I believe will yield some positive results for the Section. Please join us for this meeting.

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Finally, a challenge mentioned tangentially by Grice, but one that I believe is critical to the continuing viability of the Section and the Section's ability to meet the needs of its members is to have active Area Representatives and functioning Subcommittees. Our Area Representatives and Subcommittees are listed near the end of this issue of the FEE SIMPLE. The role of the Area Representative is to be the Section's link to the Representative's local real estate practice and to be available to answer questions from Section members. This year, the Membership Subcommittee will study the role of Area Representatives and how we can increase their involvement in the work of the Section. I commend Larry McElwain, Joe Cochran, and Randy Howard for taking on this task, and look forward to hearing their proposal. As for Subcommittees, Subcommittee Chairpersons will be asked to meet with their committee members, actively participate at meetings, and contribute to the FEE SIMPLE. The more people we get involved, the more the Section benefits.

While it would be easy to bury our heads in the sand and not face these challenges, I believe the Section is above this. It is in the best interests of the members of our Section to embrace these challenges and move forward. We all have busy schedules and feel the time pressures of our practices and families, so I know none of this will happen "overnight." However, every little step gets us closer. If you would like to participate by attending a Section meeting, becoming an Area Representative, or serving on a Subcommittee, please give me a call.

It is indeed an honor to be the Chair of the Real Estate Section. I thank you for this opportunity and look forward to working with everyone throughout the year.