

# Kentucky Equal Justice Center

## Board Minutes

April 25, 2024

**Board Members Present:** Bob Brown, Lisa Gabbard, Shelly Henry, Bruce Simpson (Community Members); Jefferson Coulter, Robert Johns (Program Directors); Andrew Chandler, Angela Dailey, La-Keisha Lewis (Staff Reps).

**KEJC Staff:** Chloe Atwater, C.B. Bates, Phoenix Berry, Ben Carter, Natalie Chambers, Heather Darby, Cory Dodds, Raaziq El-Amin, Laura Harper Knight, Robin Kunkel, Tyler Offerman, Bill Pauley, Ana Pineda, Rich Seckel, Suraya Shalash, Jane Connell Young, Andrea Zang.

### Welcome and Introductions

As the group gathered on Zoom, members greeted each other. Chair Bob Brown invited Director Rich Seckel to conduct a roll call. Rich began by noting that KEJC recently had welcomed five new staff, as follows:

**Lexington Housing Team:** Attorney Cory Dodds, earlier of Kentucky Legal Aid in Bowling Green, had joined the Lexington housing team in February along with a new part-time Intake Worker, Idalia Flores Martinez.

**Maxwell Street Legal Clinic:** Experienced attorney Charles “CB” Bates had joined the team at Maxwell Street, along with two new part-time Legal Assistants, Ana Pineda and Luis Sanz.

Rich also welcomed new Staff Representatives to the board, each of whom had been elected by their peers in Kentucky’s Legal Services Corporation-funded legal services programs:

- Andrew Chandler (Attorney Staff Rep)
- La-Keisha Lewis (Paralegal Staff Rep)
- Angela Dailey (Support Staff Rep)

Rich said he had met with the new Staff Reps for a one-hour online board orientation. He then recognized board members and staff two at a time to introduce themselves. A quorum being present, Bob called the meeting to order.

### Highlights of Recent Activity

Bob invited Rich to present highlights of recent activity. Rich offered the following:

- Rich said it had been fun to go over to Maxell Street for the potluck lunch party for departing Program Director Allison Hight. “There were lots of people and lots of energy.”
- Rich noted that lobbying is the tip of the iceberg and that monitoring is the foundation of work during the General Assembly. He thanked Health Justice Attorney Chloe Atwater for her diligence tracking bills, plus her thoughtful testimony on a complex health insurance bill.
- Rich said the defeat of HB 367—a bill to create barriers to SNAP—was the marquee “Big D” accomplishment of KEJC and other defenders of the social safety net during the Session. He said the win was “proof of concept” of the work staff members Tyler Offerman and Robin Kunkel had done to build the Kentucky Food Action Network.
- Rich said the Lexington housing team now staffed a help desk four days a week at the Lexington courthouse.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Bob Brown invited a motion on the minutes of the last board meeting.

- Motion:** Bruce Simpson moved to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2023, board meeting.
- Second:** Dawn Howard
- Action:** Approved unanimously

Bob took a moment to recognize AppalRed Legal Aid for its positive coverage during a National Public Radio story on flood relief in Eastern Kentucky.

### **Staff Reports**

The board heard and discussed staff reports on multiple issues and projects. No board action was required in response to the reports. For details, see the Staff Reports under the April 25 heading on the KEJC Board web page at <https://www.kyequaljustice.org/board-meetings>.

### **Lexington Housing Project**

Bob acknowledged an email sent to board members by April Taylor, a contract canvasser for the Lexington housing project. Ms. Taylor had criticized the projects’ outreach team, saying they were not reaching enough people in the eviction pipeline prior to their court dates. Given what looked to her like low output, Ms. Tyler had suggested that team members had misreported time.

Bob recognized Ben, as supervisor of the Lexington team, to describe KEJC’s response to the email. Ben said KEJC had taken Ms. Taylor’s concerns seriously. He noted that direct outreach to people on the eviction docket was just one element of the work of the outreach team, so that canvassing itself was not a full measure of outreach team work.

Ben said he would work with Operations Manager Heather Darby and talk individually with team members to ensure that timekeeping requirements were understood and followed. All told, Ben said, he felt the housing team members were working in good faith on a challenging project.

At Bob's invitation, Rich recapped the sequence of events in funding for the Lexington housing team. He said a grant for the project had been approved by the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG) Council in April 2023, but that KEJC had not received a grant agreement until August, leaving it unclear when the funding started.

Rich said he had signed the grant agreement in September and submitted the first bills for KEJC's work in October, starting with May and June. He said that KEJC had not yet been paid. Rich said the cash investment by now was quite large at around \$350,000. See Financial Report below. Rich noted that the City also had not yet paid Legal Aid of the Bluegrass.

Bob said that board member Bruce Simpson had left the meeting to attend to his practice. He said Bruce had passed along a report that over 1,000 Fayette County school children were homeless. Bruce had asked whether the KEJC housing team could address the problem.

Ben said that the focus of the housing team was on preventing eviction, especially of people identified in court filings. He said it would be challenging to find children and families at risk without the information from the courts.

Ben said that FYRSCs and homeless service organizations came to mind as key resources. He noted that definitions of homelessness reflect multiple types of transient situations, like doubling up with relatives. As a result, the figure that Bruce had heard did not mean that all 1,000 homeless school children were "sleeping in cars," though they were still at risk.

### **Administration: Financial Report through December 31, 2023**

Bob next recognized Rich to present the financial report. Rich first drew members' attention to the Management Report December 2023 prepared by KEJC's accounting firm, The Charity CFO. Focusing on the report's Executive Summary, he highlighted the following:

**Cash balance:** KEJC ended the year with a cash balance of \$244,110, the equivalent of just a little more than one month's worth of expenses.

**Accounts receivable:** While cash on hand was low, amounts owed to KEJC were unusually high, Rich said, including funds earned by KEJC but not yet paid by:

- Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government
- Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC)

(The Charity CFO report said that early in January, just after the report period had ended, KHC had paid KEJC \$244,181.)

**Accounts payable:** Rich said the amounts that KEJC owed were also unusually high at \$325,197. He said KEJC was waiting for the next payment from KHC to catch up on payments to the legal aid programs under the KHC statewide housing project.

**Income:** At \$2,637,809, operating revenue for FY 2023 had exceeded the budget by five percent, including the income earned but not yet paid.

**Expense:** At \$2,599,742, operating expenses for the year had exceeded the budget by an amount similar to revenue, in this case four percent.

All told in FY 2023, income for KEJC had exceeded budget by \$81,504.

### **Administration: Financial Report for First Quarter 2024**

Rich turned next to the Charity CFO report through March and highlighted similar elements, as follows:

**Cash balance:** While cash on hand had increased in March over February, it had declined since December to \$182,871, representing less than a month's worth of spending.

**Accounts receivable:** Accounts receivable remained high at the end of March at \$607,345. The Charity CFO report pointed out that the majority was owed by Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government, which had not yet paid KEJC for expenses dating back to May 2023.

**Accounts payable:** Accounts payable had declined since the December report, to \$249,968, still somewhat higher than in past years.

**Income:** At \$571,555 year-to-date revenue represented 23% of budget at 25% of the year, close to target.

**Expense:** At \$617,716, year-to-date spending also ran at 23% of budget.

All told, so far in FY 2024, KEJC had a net loss of \$35,798, better than budget by \$104,397 for that point in the year.

Rich commented that KEJC had usually run with more cash, much less that was owed to the program and much less that KEJC owed to others. He said he would devote much of his time to collecting receivables before he retired in the summer.

### **Administration: Recent Fundraising**

Rich next turned the board's attention to the tracking sheets in the board package on recent fundraising. The first sheet showed grants and campaigns in 2023. All told in 2023, KEJC had sought \$2,163,427 and received \$1,928,504—89% of what it sought.

Rich thanked Raaziq and Natalie for their work on the 2023 online Good Giving Challenge, which had raised close to \$27,000. He said Raaziq had worked hard to get KEJC's holiday

fundraising letter in the mail earlier than usual, with good results: KEJC had received \$32,569 in holiday season donations by mail, higher than the Good Giving amount.

Turning to 2024, Rich said that so far KEJC had applied for ten grants totaling \$511,239. Five had been awarded, with a modest total of \$179,636. The rest were still pending. No grants had been denied. Among those approved, a \$50,000 grant from the National Low Income Housing Coalition was a nice surprise, Rich said. It had not been expected at the beginning of the year.

Rich closed the development report by noting that two big proposals were in the works. This first was this year's Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) grant for Maxwell Street, with a projected ask of \$136,000. The second was renewal of the Vital Strategies grant to fight discrimination in medical care against people struggling with substance use, projected at \$227,700.

**Administration: Audit Bid**

Rich said that the Executive Committee (EC) had authorized him to ask auditor Vickie Richardson for a bid to audit KEJC's financial statements for FY 2023 and to prepare the IRS 990 return. The EC authorized Rich to accept the bid if it was similar in cost to the previous year.

**Governance and Strategic Plan: Succession Update**

At Bob's invitation, KEJC Treasurer Lisa Gabbard reported on the search for Rich's successor. Lisa said the effort had been coordinated by Thred Partners, who succeeded in attracting sixty-five applicants, then narrowing them down to five for remote video interviews with members of the hiring committee. Lisa said the interviews were recorded.

Lisa said that Thred Partners would work with the hiring committee to identify finalists for in person interviews. She said she had been impressed by Thred Partners' work. Jefferson Coulter agreed and praised KEJC staff members Chloe Atwater, Natalie Chambers, and Raaziq El-Amin for their contributions to the process.

**Governance and Strategic Plan: Governance Tasks 2024**

Bob invited Rich to describe governance tasks ahead. Rich noted that each year several board members' two-year terms reached their end, as did the one-year terms of officers. He said that before the next meeting he would reach out to members with expiring terms to see whether they wished to continue—and report back to Bob. Bob in turn could constitute and convene the Nominating Committee.

**Governance and Strategic Plan: Meeting Dates**

Bob recapped the board meeting dates distributed with the board package. He asked for any suggested changes. There were none. The upcoming meeting dates were:

- July 18                      Thursday                      Board Meeting
- September 19              Thursday                      Board Meeting
- December 12              Thursday                      Annual Meeting

(The July date was later changed to July 26.)

## **Adjournment**

The agenda having been completed, Bob invited a motion to adjourn.

**Motion:** Jefferson Coulter moved that the meeting be adjourned.

**Second:** Shelly Henry

**Action:** Approved unanimously

Reported by:

Richard J. Seckel  
Director

July 21, 2024