

**Draft Minutes**  
**Access to Justice Commission**  
**Wednesday, March 30, 2016**  
**231 Capital Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut**

Present: The Hon. Elliot N. Solomon, The Hon. Maria A. Kahn, the Hon. William H. Bright, Atty. Thomas Chapman, Ms. Heather Collins, Atty. Jeff Dowd, Atty. Susan Garcia, Ms. Krista Hess, Atty. Pat Kaplan, Ms. Dawn LaValle, Atty. Steve Eppler-Epstein. **Absent:** Atty. Barbara McGrath, Atty. William Clendenen, and Atty. Susan Storey.

Also present: Atty. Jennifer Robinson, Atty. Joseph Del Ciampo.

- I. **Welcome and Call to Order:** Judge Elliot N. Solomon and Judge Maria A. Kahn: Judge Solomon called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. Judge Kahn arrived at 2:30 p.m.
- II. **Review and Approval of the Draft Minutes** of the February 2015 Meeting: The minutes were approved.
- III. **Updates from co-chairs of the workgroups on current status:**
  - [Workgroup on Libraries & ATJ](#): Atty. Dowd, Ms. Hess, and Ms. LaValle provided an update on the WL&ATJ, noting that the Justice Fair, which was held in September, was a huge success. Hosted by Judge Bright, more than 100 people, mostly public librarians, attended the event, which was held at UConn Law School. Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers gave the opening remarks, and presented an award to Judge Trial Referee Raymond R. Norko, the Access to Justice Commission's first Chairman. Three panels discussed a variety of ATJ issues: *Gaps in Access to Justice*; *Bridging the Justice Gap: A Look at Where We Are Today*; and *Building the Future: Going Forward*. Panelists and moderators included Commission Co-Chairs Judge Solomon and Judge Kahn; and commission and workgroup members Ms. LaValle, Atty. Kaplan, Ms. Hess, Atty. Garcia, Atty. Eppler-Epstein, Atty. Dowd, and Atty. Jocelyn Kennedy. Superior Court Operations Division Executive Director Atty. Joseph D. D'Alesio moderated a panel, and other members included Atty. Valerie Wood, a LawyerCorps Connecticut inaugural Fellow; and public librarians Elizabeth Joseph of Stamford; J. Drusilla Carter of Willimantic; and Timothy Everett, Clinical Professor of Law & Pro Bono Coordinator, University of Connecticut School of Law; and Atty. Emily Graner Sexton, Chair, Connecticut Bar Association Young Lawyers Section.
    - As a result of the Fair, Ms. Hess reported, outreach sessions were conducted with libraries in Willimantic and Middletown.
    - Atty. Eppler-Epstein noted that as a result of the Fair, Stamford and Groton libraries are working with legal aid providers to assess the feasibility of holding legal aid programs in facilities in those cities.

- The Workgroup has developed an ATJ Quick Card of online and other resources to be used by public librarians when sharing information with patrons.
- Atty. Dowd reported that the new [judicial branch online webpage on Legal Clinics](#), developed by the Workgroup and maintained by the Branch, has had more than 3,800 hits.
- A slide cast for public librarians, on how to use the Branch's e-filing domain, is being developed with assistance from an intern at an Executive Branch agency.
- Ms. Hess noted that the Fair laid the groundwork for interaction between public librarians, Court Service Center professionals, Law Librarians, and legal aid providers.
- Ms. LaValle noted that classes conducted by Court Service Center and Law Librarian personnel for librarians, on the resources that are available to the public from the Judicial Branch, are open to all public librarians. Further, plans are in place to video record the sessions so that the librarians can access them at their convenience.
- [Workgroup on Modest / Moderate Means Programs](#): Atty. Kaplan reported that the workgroup members worked with bar associations and law schools to facilitate discussions that have resulted in the development of two incubator programs to increase access to justice, which will launch in 2016. Incubator programs are a relatively new idea but the basic schematic has new attorneys housed in subsidized/shared office space, mentoring with more experienced attorneys (and law students, in some instances), providing affordable legal services to the public on a sliding scale basis.
  - [The Center for Family Justice](#), a Bridgeport provider of services for families impacted by domestic violence, is collaborating with Quinnipiac Law School to develop a program with attorneys who will work with victims to access programs and services. Fees will be on a sliding scale basis, to help ensure a wide-range of clients can be served. The Center received a five-year grant to hire a part-time administrator for the program.
  - The Hartford County Bar Association and the University of Connecticut School of Law are developing a program, and are currently in discussion. Atty. Kaplan noted that the University of Massachusetts has a new incubator program in which Attorneys Emeritus work with new attorneys, who have made a two-year commitment to the program, in a mentoring relationship while the new attorneys provide affordable legal services to people who do not qualify or cannot be served by legal aid providers. The lawyers pay a reduced rent in exchange for the office space.
    - Atty. Kaplan suggested that the Workgroup's name be changed to reflect its current direction in facilitating incubator programs.

- [Workgroup on Online Pro Bono Legal Assistance](#): Atty. Garcia reported that Connecticut is joining a new national online pro bono website being administered and promoted by the American Bar Association. The new site, [CT.freelegalanswers.org](http://CT.freelegalanswers.org), will launch in August. The online pro bono website concept was begun by former Tennessee Access to Justice Commission chair Atty. Buck Lewis and his state's legal aid providers. The model allows people of limited income, though at rates higher than those set for legal aid qualification, to ask volunteer attorneys questions via email passed through a website, <http://www.onlinetnjustice.org/>. Questions related to civil cases only are accepted, and volunteer attorneys select those questions that they want to answer. There is no attorney-client relationship, as the person asking the question does not know the identity of the volunteer lawyer. According to Attorney Garcia, the ABA is going to serve as the administrator of the website, which will list all participating states. State bar associations will be the recruiters for their individual states. Statewide Legal Services, which has a very active pro bono panel, has hired a program coordinator to oversee recruitment. SLS will host the website, and income guidelines are being finalized. The online program is unique inasmuch as it allows attorneys to decide when they want to volunteer; how much they want to volunteer; and to set their own hours of volunteering, be it in the middle of the day, or in the middle of the night. This effort has been championed by Judge Solomon for more than two years, and he and Judge Kahn and Judge Bright expressed their appreciation for SLS's willingness to take on the project.
- [Workgroup on Video Conferencing & ATJ](#): Ms. Hess and Atty. Jennifer Robinson, a Caseflow Management Specialist in Court Operations, reported to the Commission that videoconferencing is on the upswing.
  - A pro bono videoconference program is held between the New Britain Judicial District and the Waterbury Judicial District as part of the Branch's Volunteer Attorney program for foreclosure cases.
  - Two videoconferencing programs featuring remote interpretation for people with limited English proficiency are being piloted. A shortage of qualified interpreters, combined with an increase in needed accommodations, means that it is likely a permanent remote interpretation program will be established, dependent upon budgetary availability.
  - Currently, individual calendaring notices and civil protection orders both provide for parties to request videoconferencing. Additionally, videoconferencing is routinely used for incarcerated defendants before the Appellate Court; modifications of child support by incarcerated defendants; and on the Sentence Review Board docket; and as a reasonable modification when appropriate for people with disabilities.

#### IV. Discussion of possible access to justice projects

- **Ms. Hess** told the Commission about a potential project, now underway, in which a mobile legal needs van to serve as a rolling court service center unit. Data are being collected and analyzed using a mapping approach, by researchers at the Quinnipiac Law School. Mapping will allow researchers to determine a given community's legal issues, based on foreclosure, small claims, and housing cases; instances of non-appearing defendants; filings by self-represented parties, etc. The Branch would seek a grant to purchase a van that would provide community-based services and legal information, as well as information about bar association programs, legal aid services, community resources such as domestic violence shelters, food banks, social security, mental health services, etc.

- V. **Judge Solomon and Judge Kahn** asked the Commission members to develop suggestions for possible projects, pilots, or the establishment of workgroups for further investigation, to increase access to justice. Schedule next meeting for May 2016: The next meeting of the Commission will be Wednesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, at 2:30 p.m. An agenda is forthcoming.