

**MINUTES**  
**Connecticut Judicial Branch**  
**Access to Justice Commission**  
**Thursday, Feb. 27, 2014**  
**Hartford Community Court**  
**80 Washington Street, Hartford, CT 06106**

The Connecticut Judicial Branch Access to Justice Commission met on Thursday, 27 February 2014, in the conference room at Community Court at 80 Washington St., Hartford, CT.

**Committee members in attendance:** Judge Maria A. Kahn and Judge Elliot N. Solomon (Co-Chairs), Ms. Aisha Banks, Judge William H. Bright Jr., Atty. Thomas Chapman, Ms. Heather Collins, Atty. Steven D. Eppler-Epstein, Ms. Krista Hess, Atty. Barbara McGrath, Atty. Susan Nofi, Atty. Mark Nordstrom, Atty. Herman Woodard. Also present: Atty. Joseph Del Ciampo, Legal Counsel to the Commission.

**Members absent:** Atty. William Clendenen, Chief Public Defender Atty. Susan Storey.

**Invited Commission Workgroup Members:** Workgroup on Modest/Moderate Means Programs co-chairs Atty. Patricia Kaplan and Atty. Christopher Nelson; Workgroup on Libraries & ATJ co-chair Atty. Jeff Dowd; Workgroup on Video Conferencing & ATJ co-chair Mr. Scott Rosengrant.

- I. **Welcome:** Judge Kahn welcomed the members and explained that Judge Solomon was running a few minutes late. She called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.
- II. **Review and vote on Draft Minutes of the March 28, 2013 meeting:** The Minutes were reviewed and a motion was made by Judge Solomon to accept as written, seconded by Atty. Eppler-Epstein; motion approved by Judge Kahn, Atty. Chapman, Ms. Collins, Ms. Hess, Atty. McGrath, Atty. Nofi-Bendici. Abstaining: Atty. Woodard, Att. Storey, and Atty. Clendenen.
- III. **ATJ Projects:** Judge Kahn introduced the co-chairs of the workgroups and asked them to provide updates. Judge Solomon arrived at 2:20 p.m. :
  - **Modest/Moderate Means Programs (MMMP) Workgroup:** Co-chairs Atty. Patricia Kaplan and Atty. Chris Nelson said their Workgroup has had one phone conference, after a couple of forced weather-related cancellations. The members of the Workgroup focused on defining modest/moderate means, and looking at other programs. The group has developed a draft survey to send to states and jurisdictions that have existing MMMPs. Rather than re-invent the wheel, the members hope to be able to use ideas and mechanisms that are already in place and working in other areas. The chairs shared the draft with Commission members and at Judge Bright's request will share an electronic version for comment. The workgroup is still determining the best way to distribute the survey and Judge Kahn suggested that phone calls to contacts in other states might be a good way to start, by asking why programs are successful or why they have failed.

Atty. Kaplan also said that the group will want to survey members of the Connecticut bar to see if there is an interest; Atty. Nelson, who chairs the Young Lawyers Section of the Connecticut Bar Association, believes there is support for such a program, in which people who need an attorney but don't qualify for legal aid would be able to contract with participating attorneys at reduced rates. The workgroup is meeting again in March.

- **Workgroup on Libraries and Access to Justice:** Co-chairs Atty. Jeff Dowd and Krista Hess said their workgroup, which includes a third co-chair, Ms. Dawn M. LaValle, Director of the Division of Library Development at the Connecticut State Library, met on Wednesday for two hours. The group includes librarians and law librarians, as well as representatives of the legal aid community. The members introduced themselves and spoke of areas that the workgroup should explore to create a sustained partnership of providing legal information to the community in general and self-represented parties in particular. The chairs reported to the Commission that there is an overwhelming willingness by all stakeholders to share information, including training modules, workspace, human capital resources, publications, forms, and specific area expertise. The group is considering holding 'justice fairs' across the state between public librarians, law librarians, court service center staff, and legal aid community members, and site visits by law librarians to assess public library legal collections. Before the next meeting, in March, the workgroup members are going to share via email resources that they think will help the targeted audience. The workgroup has also set a meeting for April.
- **Workgroup on Online Pro Bono Assistance:** Atty. Nofi told the Commission that this group has also met once since its establishment and is beginning to look more closely into the OnlineTNJustice.org website and a nearly identical Indiana website, which was inspired by Tennessee's. The owners of the TN program have shared with the Commission the copyright for the software and encouraged Connecticut to replicate the program in which volunteer lawyers answer questions that have been submitted by email from income-qualified people with civil (only) cases. Atty. Nofi said that the Workgroup is going to assess: current PB Rules to help ensure that attorneys would not be presented with a conflict; the establishment of income guidelines for such a program and the barriers that would exist if the program served only those who are income qualified; where and how the program would be launched and who would maintain it; the level of interest among Connecticut attorneys in volunteering their services; and insurance coverage for volunteers, among other concerns. Atty. Nofi told the Commission that the group also learned about a telephonic pro bono program, Call 4 Law, and how it operates, from a workgroup member. The Workgroup meets next in late March.
- **Workgroup on Videoconferencing and ATJ:** Co-chairs Ms. Hess and Mr. Rosengrant said there has been one meeting of this Workgroup, which is charged with developing ways to use videoconferencing to facilitate pro bono programs. The group saw a demonstration of the Branch's available V/C capabilities, and discussed the positives and negatives of using V/C for consults. Currently, the

Branch uses V/C in sentence review, habeas cases, and certain civil proceedings, as well as by probation officers and in some criminal proceedings for safety reasons. Ms. Hess said the Workgroup is assessing other uses that would expand access to justice, including using the equipment to conduct remote pro bono programs; to create training videos for attorneys that would allow lawyers to expand into different areas of law. The idea that an attorney would be able to sit in her or his office, and take questions from a self-represented party who would be in a courthouse, was very appealing to some the Commission's bar members, including Attys. Woodard and Nelson. Part of the barrier of drawing attorneys to volunteer on-site is the travel time that takes away from a lawyer's paying clients. The ability to answer questions while at their desks is very appealing, the lawyers said. There was discussion about the quality of videoconferencing, and Mr. Rosengrant told the Commission that the Branch uses a free system that provides excellent connections. Further, the system does not record the V/C, so it is not stored, and it can be used on iPads. Judge Bright said that when he uses V/C in proceedings with prisoners, the defendants are very engaged. Atty. Woodard called the idea of remote pro bono "a home run" for both needy clients, and attorneys who want to help but struggle to find the time. The Workgroup is going to begin the process of designing a pilot program that will use volunteer attorneys, possibly in foreclosure cases, in one part of the state with underserved population in another part of the state. The Workgroup is meeting on March 20.

- IV. **Discussion of [LawyerCorpsConnecticut](#)** (LCC): Judge Bright and Attorneys Nofi and Eppler-Epstein reported that the program coordinator and others are continuing outreach to corporate stakeholders who understand the value to society of access to civil justice. It is anticipated that applications for fellowships will begin in late spring.
- V. **Members' ATJ Updates:** Atty. Nofi reported on a new series of [online classes for self-represented parties](#), and a training video for pro bono attorneys, that have been posted on the [CTLawHelp.org](#) website. The classes provide easy to understand help for people with [wage complaints](#), [small claims](#), obtaining [special education for their children](#), and [unemployment appeals](#).
- VI. **Timeline & Future Meetings, Adjourn:** The Commission set its next meeting for May 22<sup>nd</sup> in the Community Court building at 80 Washington Street, Hartford. An agenda will be forthcoming. A Motion was made to adjourn and unanimously approved at 4:10 p.m.