

## Draft Minutes

### Connecticut Judicial Branch Access to Justice Commission

28 March, 2013

9:30 a.m.

225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, Connecticut

The Connecticut Judicial Branch Access to Justice Commission met on Thursday, March 28, 2013 in the fourth floor conference room at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, Connecticut.

Committee members in attendance: Judge Maria A. Kahn and Judge Elliot N. Solomon (Co-Chairs), Ms. Aisha Banks, Atty. Thomas Chapman, Ms. Linda Cimino, Ms. Heather Collins, Deputy Atty. General Nora Dannehy, Ms. Ann Doherty, Ms. Alejandra Donath, Atty. Jeffrey Dowd, Atty. Steven D. Eppler-Epstein, Ms. Jennifer Ensign, Atty. Johanna Greenfield, Atty. Barry C. Hawkins, Ms. Krista Hess, Atty. Barbara McGrath, Atty. Susan Nofi-Bendici, Ms. Roberta Palmer, State's Atty. John M. Russotto, Atty. Richard Loffredo (for Edna Press). Also present: Atty. Joseph Del Ciampo.

Members absent: Judge William H. Bright Jr., Ms. Aileen Keays, Atty. Mark Nordstrom, Ms. Rhonda Stearley-Hebert, Atty. Charisse Hutton, Ms. Sandra Lugo-Gines, Ms. Edna Press, Ms. Yanira Rodriguez, Chief Public Defender Susan O. Storey, and Atty. Herman Woodard Jr.

Judge Solomon called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

- I. Welcome: The Hon. Maria A. Kahn and the Hon. Elliot N. Solomon; introduction of new members: Judge Kahn, Ms. Banks, Ms. Donath, and Atty. McGrath: Judge Solomon welcomed the members of the Commission and introduced himself and Judge Kahn as the new Chairs of the Commission, as appointed by the Chief Justice. Judge Solomon and Judge Kahn both expressed their sincere gratitude for the work of the prior ATJC Chair, the Hon. Raymond R. Norko, who resigned as Chair in January after becoming a Judge Trial Referee. Judge Solomon noted that Judge Norko has spent two decades on the Bench and has never lost his passion for equal justice, as is evidenced in the Community Court that he was instrumental in establishing Community Court in Connecticut. Judge Kahn thanked the Commission for attending and said that prior to the meeting she has studied the Commission's report and other ATJ materials provided by support staff. The Judges then asked the members to introduce themselves and acknowledged the new members in attendance.

- II. Review and approval of draft minutes of the Sept. 24, 2012 meeting: The Commission reviewed the minutes and members who were present at that meeting approved those minutes.
- III. Discussion of Subcommittee accomplishments over the past year and potential new action from the subcommittees: Judge Solomon noted that the Commission has not met since the release of its first Annual Report to the Chief Justice. The report includes the full Commission recommendations as well as the individual subcommittee reports and findings. The following updates were given:
- Subcommittee on Criminal Issues & Child Protection: Atty. Storey was absent from the meeting but fellow member Atty. Russotto talked about the collateral consequences training that was conducted by the Office of the Chief Public Defender last fall at Central Connecticut State University. Atty. Storey invited numerous prosecutors and others to attend the training, which focused on the various consequences of guilty pleas in some cases, including immigration issues, housing, student loans, etc. The training was very well received, Atty. Russotto said, and was attended by a couple of other Commission members.
  - Subcommittee on Legal Aid/Civil Representation: Judge Bright was absent and Atty. Eppler-Epstein provided an update: Pro bono was this subcommittee's focus over the life of the Commission and the members were able to secure the civil legal aid study by three Connecticut law school professors, which frames the issues. Atty. Eppler-Epstein, is a member of the Branch's Pro Bono Committee which is chaired by Judge Bright, noted that the subcommittee's efforts were also linked to the development of a pro bono video. Going forward, the subcommittee will continue its efforts at outreach to the CBA's Pro Bono Committee; conduct local pro bono summits, study the issues surrounding pro bono requirements for admission to the bar, and increasing law school participation in access to justice, and the possibility of establishing an annual access to justice conference.
  - Subcommittee on Self-Represented Parties: Ms. Hess and Judge Solomon are the sole remaining members of the original subcommittee. Since the Commission's report was released in October (2012), Ms. Hess reported that a group of Branch staff has been working to develop a guide for court staff, including clerks and Court Service Center and Public Information Desk staff members, on working with self-represented parties. This was a recommendation of the subcommittee that ultimately was adopted by the full Commission and approved by the Chief Justice for implementation. The coming year is expected to be quite busy for this subcommittee, and new members are needed. Focus areas include limited scope representation, the expansion of the Volunteer Attorney Day programs, and collaborations with other members of the Commission, including legal aid partners. Ms. Hess also noted that a settlement with lenders that was won by Attorney General George Jepsen for the state resulted in some money being directed to the Branch.

- Subcommittee on the ABA and Technology & Access to Justice: Atty. Woodard was absent and Atty. Nofi-Bendici, Atty. Dowd and Ms. Collins spoke about the subcommittee's recommendations and the need to separate the bar aspect of the subcommittee from the technology aspect of the subcommittee.

- IV. Annual Report recommendations: prioritize and assign as necessary to existing subcommittees, possible establishment of new subcommittees as warranted: Judges Solomon and Kahn next led the Commission in a discussion about its future and posited to the members several questions, including: What does the Commission want to be, now that its foundation has been laid? Do the members believe it could best serve as an oversight Commission, or a working Commission? There was roundtable discussion about the need to implement, where workable, the Commission's report. There was discussion about the types of issues that should be considered, including expanding civil legal assistance; outreach to probate; victims' assistance, engaging law schools, etc. Members discussed the feasibility of having a variety of subcommittees that would do the concrete work — i.e., studying and making specific recommendations for consideration — of a particular area, and then having those subcommittees report back to the Commission. It was suggested that a workgroup could be established to develop a specific plan to fulfill one of the Annual Report recommendations, to study the "Moderate Means Program" currently run by the Washington State Bar Association. There was general agreement that the Commission itself should be pared down to a more workable number, but that the subcommittees can and probably should be expanded, given the number of tasks that they must perform. The Judges asked the members to think about what individual role they would like to play on the Commission, and to email support staff (Ms. Collins).
- V. The next meeting was scheduled for the end of May 2013, with a formal date and announcement to follow.
- VI. The meeting was adjourned by the Judges at 11:05 a.m.