

Minutes
Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and
Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters
March 6, 2023

The Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters met on March 6, 2023. The meeting was convened in Courtroom 1 at 95 Washington Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

Those in attendance: Judge Michael Albis (chair); Judge Jennifer Macierowski; Attorney Bryan Cafferelli; Mr. Stephen B. Carragher, Public Health Services Manager, Practitioner Licensing and Investigations Section, Department of Public Health; Attorney Susan Hamilton (designated by the Chief Public Defender); Attorney Justine Rakich-Kelly

Absent: Ms. Liza Andrews, Policy Director, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Attorney Nisa J. Kahn; Attorney Danielle S. Rado

Also in attendance were Attorney Grace Palo, Assistant Bar Counsel, and Nicole Collins and Attorney Damon Goldstein from the Judicial Branch's Court Operations Unit.

The meeting was called to order at 2:04 PM by Judge Albis. Judge Albis began the meeting by briefly recognizing Bryan Cafferelli and Danielle Rado. Attorney Rado will not be seeking another term as a member of the Committee.

A motion was made by Justine Rakich-Kelly and seconded by Susan Hamilton to thank Attorney Rado for her many valuable contributions to the work of the Committee since its inception. The motion passed by a vote of 6-0 with three members absent.

I. Review and Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Judge Macierowski and seconded by Susan Hamilton to approve the minutes from the meeting held on January 9, 2023. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0 with Justine Rakich-Kelly abstaining and three members absent.

II. Possible Removal of Individuals from List of Persons Qualified to serve as a Gal/AMC

At 2:07 PM, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes §1-200(6), Justine Rakich-Kelly moved, and Bryan Cafferelli seconded, to enter executive session to discuss complaints for removal of guardians ad litem. The Committee approved going into executive session by a 6-0 vote with three members absent. Grace Palo, Nicole Collins, and Damon Goldstein were asked by the Committee to remain present for the executive session. Judge Albis recused himself from the executive session and left Courtroom 1 for the discussion of Complaint #23-0001. Judge Macierowski served as chair in Judge Albis' absence. Upon completion of the discussion of Complaint #23-0001, Judge Albis rejoined the executive session for the discussing of the remaining complaints. The executive session concluded, and the Committee reconvened in open session at 2:16 PM.

a. Complaint #22-0007

A Motion was made by Judge Macierowski and seconded by Justine Rakich-Kelly to accept the Probable Cause Panel's findings of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the complaint. The motion passed by a 6-0 vote with three members absent. The complaint was dismissed.

b. Complaint #23-0001

A motion was made by Justine Rakich-Kelly and seconded by Bryan Cafferelli to accept the Probable Cause Panel's findings of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the complaint. The motion passed by a 5-0 vote with Judge Albis abstaining and three members absent. The complaint was dismissed.

c. Complain #23-0002

A motion was made by Judge Macierowski and seconded by Susan Hamilton to accept the Probable Cause Panel's findings of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the complaint. The motion passed by a 6-0 vote with three members absent. The complaint was dismissed.

III. Changes to the Active List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC

a. Attorney Joseph DiSilvestro

Attorney Joseph DiSilvestro was removed from the active list in January 2023 because the committee did not receive his response to its annual request for updated information. Attorney DiSilvestro emailed a request to be reinstated to the active list on February 16, 2023. Attorney DiSilvestro meets all the requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Bryan Cafferelli moved, and Susan Hamilton seconded, that Attorney DiSilvestro be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

b. Attorney Claire DeVidas

Attorney Claire DeVidas was removed from the active list in January 2023 because the committee did not receive her response to its annual request for updated information. Attorney DeVidas emailed a request to be reinstated to the active list on February 27, 2023. Attorney DeVidas meets all the requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Justine Rakich-Kelly moved, and Judge Macierowski seconded, that Attorney DeVidas be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

c. Attorney Andrew Schaffer

Attorney Andrew Schaffer was removed from the active list in January 2022 because the committee did not receive his response to its annual request for updated information. Attorney Schaffer emailed a request to be reinstated, retroactive to January 1, 2022, to the active list on February 25, 2023.

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Justine Rakich-Kelly moved, and Susan Hamilton seconded, that Attorney Schaffer be reinstated, to the active list subjected to his confirmation that he is in compliance with the continuing legal education requirements in Practice Book Section 25-62(c)(1) and his indicating whether he has an interest in contracting with the Division of Public Defender Services and/or taking cases where payment is ordered according to the Branch's sliding fee scale. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

IV. GAL Pre-Service Training Update

Susan Hamilton provided an update regarding the GAL pre-service training. There has been a consistent number of attorneys who have registered and completed the training. The challenge of obtaining GALs who are willing to be paid at state rates by the State of Connecticut still stands. Attorney Hamilton stated that this challenge is a work in progress, and the Division of Public Defender Services will be continuing to ask those individuals who complete the pre-service training if they are interested in contracting with them.

Susan Hamilton additionally discussed that in the upcoming meetings she will provide post module questions to be used in the pre-service training for review.

V. Review and Possible Revisions to the Procedures by Why an Individual May be Removed from the List of Those Deemed Eligible for Appointment as Guardian Ad Litem or Attorney for the Minor Child in Family Matters

This agenda item was tabled and will be discussed at the next scheduled meeting.

VI. Schedule of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters will be held May 22, 2023, at 2:00 PM.

VII. Such Other Matters as may Properly Come Before the Standing Committee

No other matters were brought before the Committee.

Justine Rakich-Kelly moved, and Bryan Cafferelli seconded, a motion to adjourn the meeting. The Committee approved the motion by 6-0 vote with three members absent. Judge Albis adjourned the meeting at 2:53 PM.