

Minutes  
Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and  
Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters  
October 4, 2021

The Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters met remotely via Microsoft Teams on October 4, 2021. The meeting was convened by the chair in Courtroom 407 at 1 Court Street, Middletown, Connecticut and live streamed to the public on YouTube as well as the CT-N Network.

Those in attendance: Judge Michael Albis (chair); Judge Jennifer Macierowski, Attorney Mark Korber; Mr. Stephen B. Carragher, Public Health Services Manager, Practitioner Licensing and Investigations Section, Department of Public Health; Attorney Justine Rakich-Kelly; Attorney Susan Hamilton (designated by Attorney Christine Perra Rapillo); Ms. Liza Andrews, Policy Director, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Absent: Attorney Danielle S. Rado and Attorney Bryan Cafferelli.

Also in attendance were Attorney Michael Bowler, Counsel to the Standing Committee, Attorney Jennifer Gagosz, Assistant Bar Counsel, and Attorney Damon Goldstein and Ms. Lauren Orlowski from the Judicial Branch's Court Operations Unit.

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 PM by Judge Albis. Attorney Mark Korber joined the meeting at 2:15 PM while in Executive Session.

I. Review and Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Liza Andrews and seconded by Judge Jennifer Macierowski to approve the minutes from the meeting held on May 14, 2021. The motion passed by a vote of 6-0 with two members absent and Mark Korber not yet in attendance.

II. Possible Removal of Individuals from List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC

At 2:05 PM, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes §1-200(6)(a), Susan Hamilton moved, and Justine Rakich-Kelly 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 two members absent and Mark Korber not yet in attendance. Michael Bowler, Jennifer Gagosz, Damon Goldstein and Lauren Orlowski were asked by the Committee to remain present for the executive session.

A motion was made by Justine Rakich-Kelly, and seconded by Mark Korber, to end the executive session. The motion passed by a vote of 7-0 with two members absent. The executive session concluded and the Committee reconvened in open session at 2:35 PM.

a. Complaint 1 (21-0002)

A motion was made by Liza Andrews and seconded by Justine Rakich-Kelly to accept the Probable Cause Panel's finding of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the first complaint in question. The motion passed by a 6-0 vote with Mark Korber abstaining and two members absent from the vote. The complaint was dismissed.

b. Complaint 2 (21-0005)

A motion was made by Judge Jennifer Macierowski and seconded by Liza Andrews to accept the Probable Cause Panel's finding of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the second complaint in question. The motion passed by a 7-0 vote with two members absent from the vote. The complaint was dismissed.

c. Complaint 3 (21-0006)

A motion was made by Susan Hamilton and seconded by Mark Korber to accept the Probable Cause Panel's finding of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the third complaint in question. The motion passed by a 6-0 vote with Justine Rakich-Kelly abstaining and two members absent from the vote. The complaint was dismissed.

d. Complaint 4 (21-0007)

A motion was made by Mark Korber and seconded by Liza Andrews to accept the Probable Cause Panel's finding of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the fourth complaint in question. The motion passed by a 6-0 vote with Justine Rakich-Kelly abstaining and two members absent from the vote. The complaint was dismissed.

e. Complaint 5 (21-0008)

A motion was made by Judge Jennifer Macierowski and seconded by Mark Korber to accept the Probable Cause Panel's finding of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the fifth complaint in question. The motion passed by a 7-0 vote with two members absent from the vote. The complaint was dismissed.

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

a. Mary Surette

Attorney Mary Surette was removed from the active list in 2015, per her own request, due to personal reasons. Attorney Surette emailed a request to be reinstated to the active list on June 16, 2021. Attorney Surette 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 Liza Andrews seconded, that Attorney Surette be reinstated to the

active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 7-0 vote with two members absent.

b. Akisha Cassermere

Akisha Cassermere was removed from active list in 2018 because she did not respond to an email sent to her in November 2017. Akisha Cassermere emailed a request to be reinstated on August 31, 2021. Akisha Cassermere does not meet the requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Mark Korber moved, and Susan Hamilton seconded, that Akisha Cassermere not be reinstated to the active list. The Committee denied the reinstatement without prejudice by a 7-0 vote with two members absent.

c. Nilda Negrón

Attorney Nilda Negrón was removed from the active list in 2019 because she did not respond to an email sent to her in November 2018. Attorney Negrón emailed a request to be reinstated on July 13, 2021. Attorney Negrón meets all the requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Liza Andrews moved, and Judge Jennifer Macierowski seconded, that Attorney Negrón be reinstated to the active list, retroactive to July 28, 2021 as requested by Attorney Negrón. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 6-0 vote with Justine Rakich-Kelly abstaining and two members absent.

d. Heidi Opinsky

Attorney Heidi Opinsky was removed from the active list in 2019 because she did not respond to an email sent to her in November 2018. Attorney Opinsky emailed a request to be reinstated on August 2, 2021. Attorney Opinsky meets all the requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Mark Korber moved, and Justine Rakich-Kelly seconded, that Attorney Opinsky be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 7-0 vote with two members absent.

e. Krystal Ramos

Attorney Krystal Ramos was removed from the active list in 2018 because her job at that time precluded her from performing work as a GAL. Attorney Ramos emailed a request to be reinstated on September 17, 2021. Attorney Ramos 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 Jennifer Macierowski seconded, that Attorney Ramos be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 7-0 vote with two members absent.

IV. Pre-service Training

Susan Hamilton led the discussion and reported that the list of participants completing the GAL training offered in June has been finalized. Susan Hamilton will be following up with any other participants who are not yet compliant with the training or requirements.

The Committee will discuss the best possible utilization of the recordings from the June training at a later date.

V. 2021 Request for Updated Information from Individuals on the List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC

Damon Goldstein will circulate an email inquiry to the list of active GAL members in November ensuring members have maintained eligibility to serve pursuant to Practice Book Section 25-62(c) and 25-62A(c). An email reminding members to reply to the request for updated information will be sent in early December.

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 January 10, 2022 at 2 PM.

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

No other matters were brought before the Committee.

Mark Korber moved, and Liza Andrews seconded, a motion to adjourn the meeting. The Committee approved the motion by a 7-0 vote with two members absent. Judge Albis adjourned the meeting at 3:07 PM.