

Draft Minutes of the Judicial-Media Committee's Events Subcommittee
Public Meeting Via Conference Call, Monday, May 14, 2007

The meeting started at about 3:40 p.m., with participants present identifying themselves and those calling in later identifying themselves as well. In all, the following participated: Attorney Stanley Twardy Jr., Lynne Tuohy of The Hartford Courant, Paul Giguere of CT-N, Judge Susan Handy, Judge Robert Holzberg, Dana Neves of WFSB, and Judge Michael Shay.

Attorney Twardy thanked everybody for volunteering to serve on the subcommittee. He mentioned how pleased he is to be subcommittee co-chair along with Ms. Tuohy, and said the objective of this meeting was to start thinking about future events.

Attorney Twardy added that he had received some topic ideas from Judge Doug Lavine, co-chair of the Judicial-Media Committee, which Judge Lavine requested be considered by the subcommittee. They were: 1) What can judges discuss and not discuss with the media? 2) What policies do media outlets have regarding protecting the privacy of victims? and 3) How can judges best interact with the media when corrections must be made?

Judge Holzberg mentioned an interactive forum he attended a few years ago. Participants included members of the judiciary and the media talking about how each group does its job. The forum was very interesting, Judge Holzberg said, and the same issues are present today. Judge Holzberg added that such forums could be held at various locations in the state.

Judge Handy said she believes a program regarding the news media also should be planned for the Judges Institute. Many judges are still apprehensive about cameras in the courts, she said, and she would like to see such a program planned for next year. Judge Holzberg added that a mandatory program regarding the sealing of documents and closure of courtrooms is planned for the judges. Judge Handy responded that it would be good to have a forum to talk about the obligations of both judges and journalists.

Judge Shay added that the media are a business. He questioned whether, as the media moves more toward entertainment, rights are given up. He added that only a small percentage of cases will see the light of day; most will not be sexy or important enough to merit coverage. He also cited the camera coverage of the Skakel case as a process that worked well.

Attorney Twardy asked whether the committee could be used as a forum, during which judges and journalists would discuss both theoretical and practical issues. Judge Shay added that such a forum could be used as a dry run to a full session. Judge Handy cautioned that it could be difficult to close down the courts to accommodate such a session, and that it may be worth doing a pilot program.

Judge Holzberg said it's important to consider the public as well. A future forum could be held at the Legislative Office Building and perhaps CT-N could cover the event, he said. Such an event, with an effective moderator, could promote a good dialogue, according to Judge Holzberg.

Mr. Giguere asked who the committee is trying to reach. If the committee is looking at a broader audience, it is not difficult to book a room at the LOB or the Capitol, he said, adding that a forum would be something that CT-N would cover.

Ms. Tuohy mentioned that bar-media conferences have been held in the past. Both she and Ms. Neves liked the idea of a forum for judges and the media.

Judge Holzberg said that the chief justice is very supportive of these efforts. He added that he thought it would be helpful to put together a mini-planning committee to develop a program. Judge Holzberg and Ms. Tuohy agreed to work on a subcommittee to come up with a group of panelists and possible moderators.

Attorney Twardy added that Judge Lavine's ideas (presented at the start of the meeting) could be incorporated into the forum. Judge Handy added that all three areas identified by Judge Lavine are big issues. Judge Shay said there are legitimate concerns on behalf of judges that the media have to be aware of, and that every question raised by the Judicial Branch shouldn't be viewed as negative. Judge Shay also asked whether the legislature should be involved. Attorney Twardy responded that he didn't see them as being on the panel, but that they could be invited. Ms. Tuohy added that this process would educate legislators on how far the Judicial Branch has come.

Judge Holzberg said he would like to ask Attorney Lou Pepe to help plan the event, and Attorney Twardy said Attorney Pepe would be a great addition. The subcommittee agreed that the following people would serve on a planning committee: Ms. Tuohy, Attorney Twardy, Judge Holzberg, Mr. Giguere, Attorney Pepe, and Rhonda Stearley-Hebert of the Judicial Branch.

The Events Subcommittee will hold its next meeting, via conference call, on June 25, 2007. The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.