

## Judicial-Media Committee

Minutes of meeting on March 14, 2016

Members present: Co-chairs Karen Florin and Judge Robert Devlin; Claude Albert, Tom Appleby, Linda J. Cimino, Judge Patrick Clifford, Melissa Farley, Paul Giguere, Alaine Griffin, Judge Barbara Bailey Jongbloed, Morgan McGinley, Judge Ingrid Moll, Eric Parker, Chris Powell, Tom Scheffey and Judge Dawne Westbrook.

- I. Judge Devlin opened the meeting shortly after 2 p.m. and introduced Karen Florin as the committee's new co-chair.
- II. The committee approved minutes from its meeting on Oct. 26, 2015.
- III. Ed Peruta, president of American News & Information Services Inc., and Attorney Rachel Baird addressed the committee about Mr. Peruta's recent videotaping of a murder trial in the Litchfield Judicial District. Mr. Peruta said he was honored that the Court granted his request to videotape the trial, noting that the Court worked with him on certain issues and that Chief Clerk Brandon Pelegano was very helpful. There was, he continued, a lot of interest and positive feedback regarding the trial footage that he posted on YouTube. Attorney Baird added that the defense attorney, who had objected to the camera at the beginning of trial, subsequently requested some of the footage to show that his client had laryngitis on the day he testified.

Mr. Peruta expressed concern over certain limitations during the trial. He cited the physical layout of the courtroom, the positioning of the camera in a back corner, sound issues, and an order from the court disallowing the videotaping of informants in the case. According to Mr. Peruta, his goal was to provide gavel-to-gavel coverage of the trial, and while he obtained photos of the informants and had transcripts, the public was unable to evaluate the witnesses' body language. He also questioned why the camera could not record when the jury was not in the room, saying that this sort of prohibition limits the transparency the Judicial Branch is seeking.

Overall, Mr. Peruta thanked the Judicial Branch for opening up the courts to cameras and added that he hopes to provide more transparency, noting that he has filed a request to videotape an upcoming trial. In response to Ms. Griffin, he said he has not been allowed to videotape cases where Attorney Baird is the defense attorney (Mr. Peruta works for Ms. Baird as an investigator), because, he's been told, there's a conflict. However, he said, the mainstream media doesn't cover those cases, and Mr. Peruta added that he should be able to videotape them.

Mr. Peruta responded that his goal is to do much more gavel-to-gavel trial coverage and promised to provide feedback. He and Attorney Baird thanked the committee for its time, and the discussion concluded.

- IV. Department of Correction Commissioner Scott Semple, at the invitation of co-chairs Judge Robert Devlin and Karen Florin, provided the committee with an extensive overview of the actions he is taking to better address the needs of inmates and prepare them for reintegration into society. Of particular interest, he said, are those individuals between the ages of 18-25, as scientific evidence shows that their brains have not fully developed.

Commissioner Semple answered several questions from committee members, adding during this Q&A period that the department has recently permitted cameras into Department of Correction facilities for a documentary on re-entry.

- V. Ms. Florin provided an update regarding the 2016 Law School for Journalists.
- VI. Before the meeting adjourned, the committee thanked G. Claude Albert for his nine-year tenure as co-chair of the committee. He will remain on the committee as a member. The committee scheduled its next meeting for Monday, Sept. 26, 2016, at 3 p.m., and the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:15 p.m.