

Minutes from Sept. 15, 2008, meeting of Pilot Program Committee

Present: Mr. Tom Appleby, Judge Patrick Clifford, co-chairs; Sara Bernstein, Linda Cimino, Judge David Gold, John Long, Robin Smith, Judge Elliot Solomon, Dave Ward.

Lynne Tuohy of CT-N was at the meeting in lieu of Paul Giguere.

I. Open Meeting

Mr. Appleby and Judge Clifford started the meeting at 2 p.m.

II. Minutes

Committee members unanimously approved the minutes from their meeting on May 19, 2008.

III. Update on camera requests received so far; report on Pilot Program in Hartford JD

Committee members received updates on the number of camera requests received so far and also heard from Judge Gold regarding the Pilot Program in the Hartford JD. CT-N in July videotaped several cases on one day, including pleas and three sentencings, according to Judge Gold. The response from the airing of these cases was positive, committee members said.

IV. Discussion of evaluations received so far

In summarizing the evaluations received so far, Judge Clifford reported that the media seem satisfied with the pilot program, particularly in the area of arraignments. Most of the judges were fine with the videotaping/photographing of arraignments as well, he said, adding that everyone will have to wait and see whether cameras in arraignments will affect trials down the road.

Mr. Ward mentioned that the process has gone very well at GA 13 in Enfield, where Judge Richard Dyer put in place a written request form and standing orders for media outlets. Judge Clifford responded that the committee may want to consider whether the form and standing orders should be used statewide.

For attorneys, one issue seems to be the lack of notice about camera requests, Mr. Long said. He suggested this is an area that the committee may want to discuss as well. Mr. Ward added that it is sometimes difficult to give much notice, given how quickly arraignments might occur. Judge Clifford said that there is some notice, although it may not be early notice.

Another area the committee should consider is the issue of shackles, Judge Clifford said. Judges have different views on whether they should be photographed or videotaped, he added.

Committee members then turned to camera coverage at a high-profile trial in Hartford this year. Much of the discussion focused on the photographing of jurors after a verdict. The judge in this particular trial did not want the jurors photographed outside of the courthouse. Journalists on the committee said that it is up to the jurors whether they want to talk, and that photographers have always stood on the sidewalk and taken pictures of jurors following a verdict.

Judge Clifford responded that he understood that judges don't have much authority in this area. However, he added, judges are very protective of jurors, who often are nervous wrecks about having their picture taken by the media. There also is the potential to scare off future jurors, he said. Both Judge Gold and Judge Solomon echoed Judge Clifford's concerns. Mr. Appleby suggested that the committee research what other states do regarding the photographing of jurors, and whether jurors have been lost because they've been photographed or videotaped.

Ms. Tuohy recalled one trial where jurors were asked whether any of them wanted to speak to the media. For those who did, a podium was set up in court, and the interviews occurred. That arrangement might be something to consider, she said.

V. New Business

Committee members scheduled their next meeting for Jan. 5, 2009.

VI. Adjourn meeting

The committee adjourned at 4 p.m.