

Minutes from Survey Subcommittee Meeting of July 9, 2008

Present: Karen Florin, Judge Barbara Bailey Jongbloed, Joe D' Alesio, Patrick Sanders, Tom Scheffey, Judge Carol Wolven.

Absent: Paul Giguere.

Agenda Item No. I: Co-chairs Karen Florin and Judge Jongbloed welcomed members of the committee; the meeting started at 2 p.m.

Agenda Item No. II: Subcommittee members unanimously approved the minutes from their meeting on June 11, 2008.

Agenda Item No. III: The subcommittee finalized its recommendations stemming from last year's surveys of judges and journalists, in preparation for the full Judicial-Media Committee meeting on July 14, 2008.

Subcommittee members made the following changes. (Deletions in brackets; additions in bold)

A. Facilities

1. Study courtroom acoustics and audio systems and make improvements to ensure that everyone in the **court**room can hear the proceedings.
2. Study ways to adapt current sound systems to provide the media with adequate audio feeds, while protecting participants' ability to have off-the-record, confidential conversations.
3. **New construction of courthouses should provide accommodations for the media. For existing facilities, accommodations should be made available to the media, where feasible.**

B. Public Service

1. The Court Operations Division should continue its training of courthouse staff. This subcommittee should review the curriculum used for the training on a yearly basis.
2. Develop a public service/customer service incentive for clerks and other front-line employees. Encourage clerks to greet public immediately. Provide backup when lines form in clerk's office. Provide a way for public to praise/complain about the service. Every effort should be made on the media's part to inform the clerk's office beforehand that they are interested in a case.
3. Create a vehicle for feedback and/or suggestions from judges, judicial employees, [and] the media **and the public.**

4. [The possibility of reducing the cost of copies produced at the clerk's office and/or transcripts from the court reporters/monitors should be examined.] **The cost of copies produced by the clerk's office should be reduced.**

5. Audio recordings of court monitors should be available at cost.

C. Outreach & Education

1. Expand the "frequently asked questions" section of web site and Judicial publications for media. Include sealing policies and procedures, information on availability of court exhibits and a section explaining the typical contents of a court file.
2. The Law School for Journalists should continue. Yearly informational sessions also should be provided by **the Judicial Branch** for members of the media who are interested in learning about how courthouses function generally.
 - a. External Affairs and court staff [could reach out] **should make themselves available** to new court beat reporters to provide basic information. [and let the reporters know they are available.]
 - b. Expand Judicial Branch's Speaker's Bureau to include judges willing to speak at media organizations.
3. Conduct a panel presentation of media members and judges at the Judges' Institute relating to the media **on the following topics:**
 - a. Decision-making concerning editorials;
 - b. Degree of reliability required before publishing investigative articles;
 - c. Decision-making concerning value/need for video coverage;
 - d. Discussion among judges **who have had** experience having cameras in the courtroom and members of the media.
 - e. [Experiences regarding cameras in the courtroom.]
 - f. [Off-the-record discussions] **Discussion of the pros and cons of "off-the-record" interviews with members of the media.**
4. Create opportunities for clerks [, judges] and other staff to meet with media to learn **about their respective jobs and priorities, including tours of courts and news organizations.** [about news cycles and priorities. Media could provide facility tours and be available to explain news decisions.]
5. The *Guide to Court Information* should be updated. Ensure that the *Guide to Court Information* contains a compilation of statutes and Practice Book rules relating to media coverage in the courthouse, including discretionary matters on which judges may differ and rules pertaining to Juvenile Court.

6. The Branch should consider promulgating suggested guidelines for judges as to procedure to follow when:
 - a. contacted by media;
 - b. media coverage inaccurate/unfair.
7. Designate mentors for both judges and media members to consult when issues regarding media in the courthouse arise.

D. Judicial/Media Relations

1. [Appoint media liaison in each courthouse.] **Clerk's office supervisory personnel should receive more extensive/detailed training regarding media issues.**
- [2.] **3.** The role of the Fire Brigade should be re-evaluated.
- [3.] **4.** [Ask] Clerks **should** [to] consult judge on a file's availability for public/media review when the judge has the file. Encourage the judge to make available a portion of the file, such as the complaint and latest pleading.
- [4.] **5.** Provide [ongoing] opportunities for ongoing dialogue between judges and journalists.
- 2.** Educate and inform judges [on] **about** potential resources, such as External Affairs and/or the Fire Brigade.

E. Judicial Process

1. **The Rules Committee should promulgate rules for the audio recording of court proceedings by members of the public.**
2. Review [standards for sealing documents, particularly when a criminal case investigation is "ongoing" for months or years.] **practices regarding sealing of documents, with an emphasis on openness and accountability.**

IV. Adjourn: The subcommittee adjourned at 5 p.m.