

CONNECTICUT PROBATE ASSEMBLY ANNUAL MEETING

April 26, 2017

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Judge Mahon at 11:05 a.m.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance led** by Judge Zelman.
3. **Remarks of Chief Justice Chase Rogers of the Supreme Court**

Chief Justice Rogers discussed the goals of court efficiency and the increase in pro se litigants. She acknowledged the improvements on the Probate Court website and noted the valuable assistance of court clerks. Justice Rogers also spoke of the positive steps towards increasing the use of mediation in both the Superior Courts and the Probate Courts.

4. **Approval of the January 24, 2017 Probate Assembly Meeting Minutes**
Approved

5. **Treasurer's Report:**

Judge Magistrali reported that as of today, \$15,535.00 has been spent by the Assembly on educational seminars and \$497.38 on awards and recognition materials. Treasurer's report approved.

Judge Magistrali presented the budget for 2017-2018. The proposed budget is \$35,000.00. This represents a \$5000.00 decrease from last year as there is no longer a need to budget for audit/accounting expenses. Budget approved.

6. **Committee Reports:**

Legislative – Judges Fox and Rowe

Judge Fox reported on the current appropriation request. Probate Administration requested funding of \$7.1 million this year and \$7.4 million next year. The governor's proposed budget has a \$4.5 million appropriation. There was a proposed budget before the General Assembly that had a \$5.5 million appropriation. However, this budget was not put to vote yet. The Republican budget proposal has not been released yet. Judge Fox encourages all members to continue speaking to their legislators.

Judge Rowe presented an update on current proposed legislation affecting the Probate Courts. The annual operations bill has several provisions, but three are of particular interest. First, providing whistleblower protection for court staff. Second, extending Regional Children's Court services to Fairfield County. Third, to allow guardians of the intellectually disabled to handle finances if the disabled person's assets are under \$10,000.00.

A bill concerning conservatorships permits random audits of conservatorship accounts and directs PCA to establish standards of practice for conservators.

Finally, there is proposed legislation that would permit use of the income of a conserved person receiving Title 19 to pay conservator and court fees.

Procedures Review – Judge Berkenstock

Judge Berkenstock thanked the judges, staff and PCA staff that comprise the committee for their hard work.

Statistics – Judge Dorval

The committee is meeting monthly. The goal is to develop an alternative to weighted workload with an emphasis on the work done by the clerks.

7. Elections

Judge Marino, chair of the Nominating Committee, recognized the service of retired Judge Joseph Egan as the long time chair of the committee.

Judge Marino presented the slate of candidates:

Officers:

President – Judge	Honorable Brian Mahon
First Vice President – Judge	Honorable Philip Wright
Second Vice President – Judge	Honorable Michael Brandt
Executive Secretary	Honorable Evelyn Daly
Recording Secretary	Honorable Leah Schad
Treasurer	Honorable Michael Magistrali

Executive Committee:

Fairfield County	Honorable Paul Ganim
Hartford/Tolland County	Honorable Michael Darby
Windham County	Honorable Andrea Truppa

Budget Committee:

Term 2017-2019	Honorable Fred Anthony
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Council on Probate Judicial Conduct:

Term 2017-2021	Honorable Andre Dorval
	Honorable Michal Magistrali (alternate)

The slate was approved as presented.

8. Remarks of the Probate Court Administrator

Judge Knierim thanked Chief Justice Rogers and Justice Carroll for attending the assembly meeting.

The Probate Courts have had a 5% growth in caseload this year and Judge Knierim acknowledged the staff for handling the increase. He noted several recent positive advances in the system; the launching of the contract conservator program, securing a grant for developing online training for conservators, pursuing legislation to audit conservators and pursuing online CO-17s.

Judge Knierim also reported that PCA continues to work on developing e-filing for the probate system. He acknowledged the great job Judge Mahon has done as

President of the Assembly. He thanked all of the judges and staff who serve on the various committees of the assembly and acknowledged the efforts of CAPCS and its officers.

Finally, Judge Knierim thanked the hard working staff of PCA and encouraged all judges and staff to continue in their efforts to support the budget process.

9. Remarks of the President Judge

Judge Mahon acknowledged the contributions of staff, PCA staff and the judges in preserving the Probate Court system.

10. Recognition of Retired Judges

Two retired judges were honored for their service to the probate system.

Judge Joe Egan, from the Northern Fairfield County Court, served as a probate judge for 27 years.

Judge Sydney Elkin, from the West Hartford Court, served as a probate judge for 15 years.

11. Presentation of Service Awards to Clerks

Five court clerks were honored for 25 years of service to the probate system:

Joan Sheffield, from the Berlin Probate Court

Cynthia Edkins, from the Greenwich Probate Court

Nadine (Mary) Wall, from the New Haven Probate Court

Trudy Feddersen, from the Simsbury Regional Probate Court

Marlene Karp, from the West Hartford Probate Court

12. Presentation of the Glenn E. Knierim Pro Bono Award

The award was presented to Attorney Denise Rioux. Attorney Rioux was unable to attend, but sent a letter thanking the assembly.

13. Presentation of the Public Service Award

The award was presented to Senator Martin Looney. Judge Knierim recognized Senator Looney's strong commitment to the probate system. He recognized him as a dedicated public servant who ably serves the citizens of the state. Senator Looney was instrumental in restoring funding to the probate system, was a key supporter of the establishment of the regional children's courts and was very helpful during the Probate Court consolidation.

14. Other Business to come before the Assembly - None

15. Adjournment - Meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Hon. Leah Schad
Recording Secretary