

CONNECTICUT PROBATE ASSEMBLY MEETING

June 23, 2021

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Judge Brandt at 11:51 a.m. Judge Brandt thanked CT-N for broadcasting our Assembly meeting and briefly spoke about the probate court system.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Assembly members all rose and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll call of the Judges

Twenty-four judges were present by Cisco-WebEx video conference for the meeting, including Probate Court Administrator Judge Streit-Kefalas. Attorneys Heather Dostaler and Evan Brunetti, Director of Communications Melissa Riley and Judge-Elect Elizabeth Leamon also attended.

3. Approval of the April 21, 2021 Meeting Minutes

After the Assembly reached a quorum, Judge Wright moved and Judge Barrett seconded a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Committee Reports

Continuing Education

Judge Brandt reported that the Committee had completed a webinar prior to this Assembly meeting and the next and last webinar is set for Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. The fall Assembly meeting will feature an in-person seminar.

Ethics

No Report

Legislative

Judge Fox reported that a successful legislative session had recently ended. The Probate Ops bill passed and our funding request was granted as part of the approved budget. The sweep was, however, not suspended.

Nominating

Judge Brandt reported that the Committee's slate of nominations had been approved at the Annual Assembly meeting in April.

Planning Committee

Judge Anthony reported that his Committee is awaiting an assignment.

Procedures Review Committee

Judge Berkenstock reported that the last meeting was May 3, 2021. The Committee continues to review and revise forms in response to changes in the law and other recommendations. She also indicated that the Committee voted to revise the inventory form to include separate forms for 5 specific case types; decedent's estates, conservators, trust, guardian of the estate and guardian of adults with intellectually disability to handle finances.

Public Information

Judge Blick reported that the Committee is waiting to finalize the brochures and display boards which will then be available for use by the courts.

Conservatorship Guidelines

No Report

Court Security

Judge Brandt reminded the Assembly members that Judge Calabrese is organizing the next webinar on Workplace Violence.

Floating Clerks

Judge Berkenstock indicated that there is no need for this Committee to meet. There is an active list of retired clerks on file with Chief Counsel Heather Dostaler. If courts are interested in the program then they should contact either Attorney Dostaler or Judge Berkenstock.

Hospitality

Judge DeGennaro is planning a social component at the next Assembly meeting in September.

5. Remarks of the Probate Court Administrator

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that since the last Assembly meeting the CT General Assembly's regular and special sessions successfully concluded resulting in full funding for our budget. She expressed thanks to all who reached out to legislators.

The annual Legislative Summary is being prepared and will be sent out when completed.

On June 3, 2021 Judge Andre Dorval officially retired as the judge for Region 19 Probate Court after 26.5 years of service. Judge William Hamzy has been sworn in to replace him. Congratulations to both judges.

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that the COVID positivity rate continues to trend downward. As of May 19th all business sectors rules had been lifted. She reminded the Assembly that many of the Executive Orders sunset on June 30th. Executive Order 12B that most affects our probate system expires on July 20th at 11:59 p.m..

Regarding vaccination rates, Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that 55% are fully vaccinated and 61% have received the first dose. She reminded judges if a court is located in a municipal building that the courts must follow the municipal guidelines, including full in-person access to the public.

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that the Advisory Committee on the CT Probate Rules of Procedure has almost completed its review. Proposals for new or revised rules will be implemented, if approved, in July 2022.

Judge Clebowicz of the Berlin Probate District together with Judge Wright, Administrative Judge of the Central CT Regional Children's Court have announced the expansion of the children's court to include the Berlin District.

The eFiling roll out is expanding to state agencies with DCF as the first agency. It is currently in a pilot phase with hopes to expand statewide by the end of July. The Office of the Attorney General is next on the agenda.

6. Remarks of President-Judge

Judge Brandt mentioned that Chief Justice Robinson spoke very highly of the probate court system as well as his partnership with Judge Streit-Kefalas at the Annual Meeting. Judge Brandt is looking forward to working with the Chief Justice and to his continued involvement with our system. He thanked Judge Streit-Kefalas, Melissa Riley and others at PCA for work with legislators on our budget and other legislative enactments during the session.

Judge Brandt expressed his welcome to summer! He pointed out that things are returning to normal and reminded all to take time with their families.

He reported that we will be returning to an in-person Assembly meeting with a seminar and hospitality event in September.

Finally, Judge Brandt again thanked CT-N for broadcasting the meeting.

7. Any business to come before the Assembly

None

8. Adjourn

Motion was made by Judge Darby seconded by Judge Gardner Riordan and unanimously carried to adjourn at 12:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Hon. Kathleen N. Maxham
Recording Secretary