

CONNECTICUT PROBATE ASSEMBLY MEETING
Minutes
September 14, 2021

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Judge Brandt at 4:35 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Assembly members all rose and recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by Probate Court Administrator Beverly Streit-Kefalas.

Roll call of the Judges

Twenty-seven judges were present by Cisco-WebEx video conference for the meeting, including Probate Court Administrator Judge Streit-Kefalas. Attorneys Heather Dostaler, Evan Brunetti and Eric Rothausser also attended.

3. Approval of the June 23, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Judge Wright moved and Judge Darby seconded a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Reports

Judge Randich presented the FYE 06/30/2021 Fourth Quarter Budget Report showing one expenditure. He also presented the 2021 Fiscal Year End Budget Report showing one expenditure as noted in the Fourth Quarter Report. Judge Gardner Riordan moved and Judge Hoyle seconded a motion to approve the Fourth Quarter Report. The motion carried unanimously. Judge Yamin moved and Judge Hoyle seconded a motion to approve the Year End Budget Report. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Committee Reports

National College of Probate Judges

Judge Yamin thanked Judge Streit-Kefalas for her support of the NCPJ. She also thanked all judges who participated in the virtual conference held in May by NCPJ. The next conference is planned for Savannah, GA commencing November 9, 2021. She detailed the educational programs to be offered and encouraged all to attend. She expects to be elected President-Elect at this conference. The spring conference is set for May 16-22, 2022 in Colorado Springs, CO and the fall meeting will be in Destin, FL when Judge Yamin is anticipated to be elected as President.

Continuing Education

Judge Brandt reported that the Committee had completed a webinar prior to this Assembly meeting. He thanked all presenters as well as Evan Brunetti and the IT Department for the swift conversion of the seminar from in-person to virtual. The committee will meet again on September 21, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.

Ethics

Judge Magistrali reported that he will be scheduling a Committee meeting for October.

Legislative

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that this Committee will start to meet again in November to prepare for the upcoming legislative session.

Nominating

No Report

Planning Committee

Judge Brandt reported that Judge Anthony and his Committee are awaiting an assignment.

Procedures Review Committee

Judge Berkenstock reported that the last Committee meeting was September 12, 2021. She recognized and thanked Chief Counsel Heather Dostaler for her hard work on the forms she crafted to reflect changes from the Parentage Act. Those forms were the main topic at the recent meeting. The next meeting will be November 1, 2021.

Public Information

Judge Brandt stated that this Committee will meet on September 20, 2021.

Conservatorship Guidelines

No Report

Court Security

Judge Calabrese reported that there was good attendance at the Active Shooter webinar. He encouraged all judges to schedule a security assessment with their local police departments. The assessments need to be completed on a regular basis.

Floating Clerks

No Report

Hospitality

No Report

6. Remarks of the Probate Court Administrator

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that since the last Assembly meeting she and Judges Anthony, Brandt and Yamin attended an in-person meeting of the Connecticut Association of Probate Clerks in Orange.

Regular and special sessions of legislature have ended and they were very successful. One of the most significant pieces of legislation was the full approval of the general fund appropriations request. She thanked all judges for their support.

Merit pay compensation adjustments were implemented in July for staff. The staff are the backbone of court operations and the compensation adjustments are well deserved. Other system improvements include the roll out of Paychex Flex that will offer flexibility and facilitate time and record keeping for staff; and the expansion of eFiling to state agencies. DCF is now a mandatory eFiler for the system. The AG's office and DDS are in the pilot phase.

She welcomed Judge Beth Leamon who was sworn in on September 3, 2021 as Judge of the Southeastern CT Regional Court. And she reported that two special elections will be held in November: one for the Berlin Probate Court with the retirement of Judge Clebowicz and the other for her position in the Milford-Orange Probate Court.

She also reported that interviews for the position as of Manager of Communications and Intergovernmental Relations will start shortly.

Judge Streit-Kefalas welcomed Attorney Eric Rothausser as an addition to the legal department at PCA. His extension is #311.

She discussed her recommendation that all judges mandate vaccines for court staff as is already mandated by the Judicial Branch. She is available to discuss this issue with judges.

She reminded judges to update outgoing voice mail message to indicate that the courts are open. She also reminded judges that Rule 66 does allow electronic hearings on the request of a party or witness.

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that the rule revisions proposed by the Advisory Committee on the Probate Court Rules of Procedure are close to completion. There will be a public hearing on the revisions in November 2021. Then the recommendations will then be submitted to the Connecticut Supreme Court for approval.

Remarks of President-Judge

Judge Brandt stated he was very hopeful we would be in person today but COVID concerns were overriding. He expressed his thanks to PCA, Judge Streit-Kefalas, Evan, Heather and welcomed Eric Rothausser. He recognized Judge Clebowicz for his years of service as he will be retiring in October.

The next meeting of the Assembly will follow the Judges Institute on October 26, 2021 at the CBA in New Britain. He welcomed Judge Leamon to the Assembly.

7. Any other business to come before the Assembly

None

8. Adjourn

Motion was made by Judge Barrett seconded by Judge Hoyle and unanimously carried to adjourn at 5:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Hon. Kathleen N. Maxham
Recording Secretary