

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**January 13, 2021**

Attendees: Judges Anthony, Barrett, Becker, Berkenstock, Brandt, Calabrese, Daly, Darby, DeGennaro, Fox, Gardner Riordan, Jalowiec, Magistrali, Marino, Maxham, McGrath, Randich, Rowe, Schad, and Wright, and also Probate Court Administrator Judge Streit-Kefalas, Manager of Communications Melissa Riley, Chief Counsel Bonnie Bennet.

**1. Call to Order:**

Due to the continued public health emergency, the meeting was held in person and remotely via Cisco WebEx video conferencing and was called to order at 9:55 AM.

**2. Approval of the Minutes:**

A motion was made by Judge Magistrali seconded by Judge Gardner Riordan and unanimously carried to accept the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of December 9, 2020 as presented.

**3. Treasurers Report:**

Judge Magistrali presented the quarterly Treasurer's Report that had been distributed with the agenda for the period commencing October 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. No activity was reported. A motion was made, seconded and unanimously carried to approve the budget as presented.

**4. Correspondence:**

Judge Brandt reported that he had received no correspondence. Judge Streit-Kefalas reported she also had not received any correspondence.

**5. Committee Reports:**

Continuing Education

Judge Becker reported that the Committee has scheduled webinars through the end of March 2021. Participants must sign-up through Paychex. The Committee will meet on January 19, 2021 to discuss and schedule at least 2 hours of webinars a month through June 2021. Judge Becker indicated that the Committee has received many topic ideas and offers to present. She encouraged all to continue to reach out to the Committee with new ideas. She is hopeful that we will meet fully in person by September. The Committee is also beginning to plan the joint Bench and Bar program that is typically held in November.

Judge Brandt reminded everyone to look over the seminar dates and lock them to ensure attendance at the webinars.

Ethics

No Report.

Legislative

Judges Fox and Rowe reported that the legislative session has commenced and bills are still being filed. They are getting updates on bills that may impact the Probate Court system. Melissa Riley

and Pete Smith continue to be very helpful resources in this area. The Judges reported that the probate operations bill has been submitted and will be assigned a public hearing soon. Judge Rowe thanked Melissa Riley for arranging the last Committee meeting to be live on CT-N. The feedback on Judge Fox's debonair appearance was positive.

Judge Streit-Kefalas reiterated the names of the newly-elected leadership in the House and Senate. She reported that Melissa Riley is tracking all relevant bills for us and PCA will update the Assembly as they go through the system, especially if there is a need for testimony. Please reach out to Melissa with any issues in this area. The Judiciary Committee has met but were just considering judicial nominations. Public hearings on bills will follow soon.

### Nominating

Judge Marino, after thanking Judges Darby and McGrath for their assistance and all judges who have agreed to serve, confirmed that the following nominations will be presented for a vote at the full Assembly meeting on January 27, 2021:

#### OFFICERS:

Term: 2021 - 2022

- President-Judge Michael R. Brandt
- First Vice President-Judge Evelyn M. Daly
- Second Vice President-Judge Michael M. Darby
- Executive Secretary- Leah P. Schad
- Recording Secretary-Kathleen N. Maxham
- Treasurer-Robert A. Randich

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Term: 2021 - 2024

- Litchfield County-Michael F. Magistrali
- Middlesex County-Jeannine M. Lewis
- Tolland County-Barbara Gardner Riordan

#### BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Term: 2021 - 2023-Fred J. Anthony

#### COUNCIL ON PROBATE JUDICIAL CONDUCT:

Term: 4/2021 - 4/2025

Michael F. Magistrali, member  
Elisa H. Bartlett, alternate

### Planning

No Report.

### Procedures Review

No Report.

### Public Information

No Report.

## **AD HOC COMMITTEES**

### Conservator Guidelines

No Report.

### Court Security

No Report.

### Floating Clerks

No Report.

### Hospitality

No Report.

### Modifications for Pandemic/Extraordinary Circumstances

No Report.

## **6. Comments of the Probate Court Administrator:**

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that Sue Dornfried will be retiring and her last day will be January 29, 2021. Sue has been the key person for all committees in organizing minutes, reports and agenda. It is unfortunate that we cannot recognize her in person but all should reach out to her.

The Emergency Compensation Plan that established the cohort schedules will end on January 22, 2021. The post-holiday COVID surge we are experiencing is largely attributed to the failure of individuals to adhere to the recommended guidelines of mask wearing, social distancing, and hand washing. Judges need to continue to guide their staff to strictly adhere to the guidelines in the workplace. We are fortunate that restrictions remain, in most courts, on in-person access to the public. A few courts are open to the public. She urged all Judges to please make sure all guidance is adhered to protect staff and ourselves. Stay healthy.

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that the Allocation subgroup of the Vaccine Advisory Group had a meeting but did not complete the review of recommendation to the full Vaccine Advisory Group. Meetings were held by state and federal officials yesterday. It has been recommended that Phase 1b include individuals aged 65 years and older or those having at least one of the federally recognized co-morbidities as outlined in CDC website. The language of the recommendation bears highlighting. When setting guidelines, the Advisory Group is directed to look at the risk of mortality and increased risk of severe illness and to address issues of inequity and those disparately impacted by COVID.

She reported that under the current Phase 1b there are approximately 700,000-800,000 CT residents. With the proposed new additions to Phase 1b, the projected numbers of eligible persons will double. So Phase 1b will be tiered. Judge Streit-Kefalas read a quote from acting Commissioner Deidre Gifford, MD at DPH asking for patience and forbearance in awaiting vaccinations.

She also stated that even though the courts are deemed essential, DPH is dealing with limited

number of doses so there will be tiers within the phase. Judge Streit-Kefalas has communicated with DPH regarding the priority status for probate employees and will continue to advocate for priority status as number of vaccine doses increases. If reserves are released, it may open up increased doses of vaccines in this Phase. Judge Streit-Kefalas values everyone's worry and concern. Patience is urged and PCA is advocating for all. She reported that the roll out will be by appointment only. The feedback is that CT has one of the most organized, most efficient and most effective roll out of the vaccine.

Judge Randich inquired about how to get an appointment. Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that the state is utilizing the CDC's online Vaccine Administration Management System called VAMS. We have registered the Probate Court system with VAMS. We anticipate the process will be notification to each individual by email to schedule online for an appointment. There is also now a telephone system available for those with limited or no online access. Medical providers will also reach out to those over age 75.

Judge Marino recommended that Judges should consider staggering dates for the staff getting the vaccine because of possible side effects.

**Comments of the President Judge:**

Judge Brandt thanked Judge Streit-Kefalas for her end of the year message outlining all that had been accomplished in 2020 especially in the area of staff compensation. He spoke of good qualities that he has seen in some people in his court especially during stressful times. He encouraged all to stay positive and thanked all present for being part of the Executive Committee.

The annual meeting will be held remotely as will all meetings through June 2021.

**7. Other Business to come before the Executive Committee:**

Chief Counsel Bonnie Bennet reported that, with mixed emotions, she will be retiring on April 1, 2021. She has had an incredibly rewarding 31-year career in the probate system, 16 years as a judge and the rest at PCA as counsel and chief counsel. She has worked for 3 Probate Court Administrators and complimented Judge Streit-Kefalas for her leadership during this last most challenging year. Bonnie has a new grandchild and is looking for flexibility. Judge Streit-Kefalas indicated she is saving her comments for the full Assembly meeting on January 27, 2021.

**8. Adjournment:**

A motion to adjourn was made by Judge Wright seconded by Judge Gardner Riordan and unanimously approved. The meeting ended at 10:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Hon. Kathleen N. Maxham  
Recording Secretary