



CONNECTICUT PROBATE ASSEMBLY

ANNUAL MEETING April 10, 2024

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Judge Evelyn Daly at 11:00 a.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Judge Michael Brandt lead the Assembly in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll call of the Judges

Thirty-five judges were present at the Connecticut Supreme Court for the meeting.

3. Remarks of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

The Honorable Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson welcomed all attendees to the Supreme Court. He congratulated the judges on a great year and remarked on the positive difference the courts make in the lives of individuals as well as the effective and efficient jobs that the courts do. He commended the Probate judges for the community outreach they do with presentations and educational forums on probate law noting that “such outreach is sure to enhance public trust and confidence in the probate process.” He reviewed all the training available to judges and staff noting that the topics are relevant and timely. He encouraged a robust pro bono practice to ensure all individuals have access to the courts.

4. Approval of the January 24, 2024 Probate Assembly Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Judge Dominick Calabrese and seconded by Judge Brandt to approve of the minutes for the last Assembly meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Treasurer’s Report and Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2024

Judge Robert Randich reviewed the Treasurer’s Report for the third quarter that had been distributed to all judges. He noted that there are still funds on hand. Judge Barbara Gardner Riordan moved and Judge Hamzy seconded a motion to approve the Report. The motion carried unanimously.

Judge Randich reviewed the proposed budget for the Assembly for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025 noting it is the same as the current budget. Judge Gardner Riordan moved and Judge Mark DeGennaro seconded a motion to approve the proposed budget for fiscal year 2024. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Committee Reports

Continuing Education

Judge Jeannine Lewis described the role of the committee noting that it meets every other month in the library at PCA at 9:30 a.m. The next committee meeting is April 24, 2024. All judges are encouraged to send suggestions for seminars to the committee. The next seminar is scheduled for June 26, 2024 at Central Connecticut State University. Topics to be covered are: Situational Awareness and De-Escalation techniques; Firearms rights in the probate process; State Library archives and probate records and probate appeals.

Ethics

Judge Brandt gave an overview of the committee's purpose in giving guidance to judges in judicial ethics. He thanked and named all committee members. The next meeting is on June 5, 2024 at 3:30 p.m. in the PCA Library.

Legislative

Judge Beverly Streit-Kefalas, Probate Court Administrator, reported for Co-Chairs Judges Gerald Fox and T.R. Rowe. She noted that the Senate is in session and encouraged judges to visit with their Senators after the meeting. The legislature has about one month left before the end of this short session. The biggest legislative issue this session is the proposed budget. She reported that the Appropriations Committee had decided to maintain last year's approved budget that does not include the appropriation needed to fully fund the Probate Courts. She encouraged all to speak with legislators on this issue.

Planning Committee

Judge Fred Anthony gave an overview of the committee indicating that the goal is to provide uniformity among the courts in practice and procedure. The committee is currently working on guidelines for remote and in-person hearings.

Procedures Review Committee

Judge Berkenstock described the mission of the committee also known as the Forms Committee: to revise forms to reflect recent legislation and to make them user friendly for the public. She thanked the members of the committee and indicated that suggested form changes may be submitted to Judge Berkenstock or staff Attorney Eric Rothausser. The committee meets quarterly, and the next meeting is June 3, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. in the PCA library.

Public Information

Judge Lisa Wexler stated that the mission of the committee is to educate the general public about the role of the courts. She described the available presentation boards and pamphlets judges may use when speaking in their

communities. She encouraged all judges to get in front of the public whenever they are able. The next meeting is September 6, 2024.

Court Security

Judge Calabrese described the mission of the Committee which came into existence after the Sandy Hook tragedy. The goal of the Committee is to work with all courts to facilitate and implement steps to maximize security in court buildings. The Committee is compiling the results of a recent survey which will be discussed at the next meeting on May 6, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. in the PCA Library.

7. Elections

Judge Sean Peoples, member of the Nominating Committee, presented the slate of nominations for the Assembly:

OFFICERS:

Term: 2024-2025

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • President-Judge | HONORABLE MICHAEL M. DARBY |
| • First Vice President-Judge | HONORABLE PETER C. BARRETT |
| • Second Vice President-Judge | HONORABLE MATTHEW J. JALOWIEC |
| • Executive Secretary | HONORABLE ARIANA F. CENEVIVA |
| • Recording Secretary | HONORABLE KATHLEEN N. MAXHAM |
| • Treasurer | HONORABLE ROBERT A. RANDICH |

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Term: 04/2024- 04/2027

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Tolland | HONORABLE BARBARA GARDNER RIORDAN |
| • Litchfield | HONORABLE DOMENICK N. CALABRESE |
| • Middlesex | HONORABLE JEANNINE LEWIS |

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Term: 04/2024-04/2026 HONORABLE MICHAEL R. BRANDT

The slate was nominated and elected as presented. All officers in attendance were sworn in by Judge Daly.

8. Presentation of Service Awards to Clerks

Judge Daly announced the 25 year service awards for the following clerks:

Karen Stonoha - Cheshire-Southington Probate Court presented by Judge Matthew Jalowiec

Mary Blair - Middletown Probate Court presented on behalf of Judge Joseph Marino by Judge Streit-Kefalas

Absent but recognized were also:
Manroe Gordon - Bridgeport Probate Court
Mary-Beth Luzzi - East Haven-North Haven
Stella Caione – Saybrook Probate Court

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

Judge Daly spoke of the purpose of the award and presented it to a most deserving recipient, Attorney Claudia Barbieri. She said Attorney Barbieri never says no. Attorney Barbieri spoke of the challenges presented when representing clients in probate matters. She emphasized the need for attorneys for individuals in probate court. She thanked all the probate clerks and PCA for helping her with the difficult job.

10. Announcement of the Daniel F. Caruso Public Service Award

Judge Streit-Kefalas announced that the award will be presented to Mairead Painter, the Connecticut State Long Term Care Ombudsman who will receive the award at the next Probate Assembly in June.

11. Remarks of the Probate Court Administrator

Judge Streit-Kefalas thanked Chief Justice Robinson and Chief Court Administrator Judge Elizabeth A. Bozzuto for their ongoing support of our probate courts. She thanked Attorney Barbieri for her commitment to our courts. She thanked all the newly elected officers. She acknowledged and thanked Judge Daly for her commitment as President for the last two years. She especially thanked Evelyn Gonzalez and all the staff at PCA who improve our daily working lives.

She reported that the biennial report was distributed to all and is available on our website. She commented that there has been in a 18% increase in the number of matters heard by the courts and many matters have increased in complexity. Our aging population will continue to challenge our court system.

She spoke of a symposium she attended on trauma informed care which has shown to provide positive results for individuals in today's society. She hopes that we can be a "trauma informed" Probate Court system to not only avoid retraumatizing individuals who the courts serve but also to enhance and improve their lives.

12. Remarks of the Outgoing President-Judge

Judge Daly remarked that she has full confidence in Judge Darby assuming the role of President Judge. She spoke of the unique role of Connecticut Probate Courts commenting that the system works due to the collective efforts of all. She praised the Probate Court Administrator and PCA staff for their efforts in supporting our courts.

13. Remarks of the Incoming President-Judge

Judge Darby acknowledged the efforts of Judge Daly as President for the last two years and awarded her with a clock. He reminded all present that we need to be always cognizant of the unique role our courts play in the Connecticut court system. He reminded judges to always think about why we are here as a unique court system and to ensure best practices in an effort to preserve our system.

14. Any other business to come before the Assembly

None

15. Adjourn

Judge David Shepard made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Judge Clifford Hoyle and unanimously carried. The Assembly adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Hon. Kathleen N. Maxham
Recording Secretary