

Probate Court Budget Committee

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 28, 2015
5:00 p.m.

Library at the Office of the Probate Court Administrator
186 Newington Road, West Hartford, CT

The meeting was convened at 5:10 p.m.

In attendance: Judge Paul Knierim, Probate Court Administrator and Chair and Judge Joseph Marino. Judge Fred Anthony participated by telephone.

Remarks by Judge Knierim

Judge Knierim told the committee that the budget will be the top priority in the 2016 legislative session. PCA will seek restoration of a cap on decedents' estate fees and will request general fund appropriations for specific expenses related to the social service responsibilities of the courts. PCA is also working with OPM to monitor revenue from the probate fee increases and identify areas of potential savings.

Judge Knierim reported on the new requirement that courts obtain advance approval from PCA to fill vacancies. He indicated that the procedure is functioning well. The system is making progress towards using full-time positions, rather than multiple part-time arrangements, as a means of reducing benefits costs.

Public Comment and Correspondence

Evan Brunetti, Chief Clerk, Farmington-Burlington Probate Court and Vice President of CAPC

Kelley Clairmont, Chief Clerk, Windham-Colchester Probate Court

Compensation Study Adjustments

Judge Knierim thanked Andrea King and Alyce Cariseo for their excellent work on the compensation study, including the preparation of calculation worksheets for each employee. No objections have been received concerning the implementation policies or the calculations for individual employees.

PCA has determined that two minor adjustments are needed to the group definitions that are used to calculate the compensation study adjustments. First, group 4 (employees hired on or after January 5, 2011 at minimum) should have additional language specifying that an employee hired on or after July 1, 2015 will receive the higher of the new minimum for his or her position or current pay. Second, group 6

(retired rehires) would be expanded to all positions and refer to the market rate as of November 2015 rather than specifying rates for each position. Both changes are highlighted in the document "Group Definitions" in the meeting materials.

Judge Marino moved that the revisions to the "Group Definitions" as presented in the budget committee materials be approved. Judge Anthony seconded the motion. Judge Knierim called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

The compensation study adjustments will be processed for the payroll period beginning on November 7, 2015.

Results of 2015 Merit Pay Adjustments

Andrea King reported on the merit pay adjustments, which became effective for the pay period beginning July 4, 2015. A total of 296 employees received merit adjustments and the annual cost is \$357,000. The number of employees who are ineligible because their pay exceeds the maximum for the position is now only four. Approximately 50 employees are at the maximum for their positions and eligible for merit pay that is capped at 2% and not added to base pay. The annual cost for merit pay for this category of employee is \$60,000.

2016 COLA

The committee deferred action on the 2016 COLA until the December meeting.

Staffing Level Adjustments

Judge Knierim explained the proposed increase in benchmark hours for the Tolland-Mansfield Probate Court. The court is currently staffed with three part-time employees but has consistently needed temporary staff to stay current on court business. The proposed 0.4 FTE increase to 2.7 will permit all three employees to work full-time schedules and eliminate the need for temporary part-time staff.

Judge Marino moved to approve the increase in the Tolland-Mansfield Probate Court's benchmark staffing level. Judge Anthony seconded the motion. Judge Knierim called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Andrea King presented the proposed adjustments to the fiscal year 2015-16 office budget for the New Haven Regional Children's Probate Court. The proposal would transfer funds among budget lines, with no net increase in the total budget, and will permit the court to use a P-card to pay for legal notices rather than forwarding invoices to PCA. The arrangement is more efficient.

Judge Anthony moved to approve the revisions to the New Haven Regional Children's Probate Court office budget. Judge Marino seconded the motion. Judge Knierim called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Schedule Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for December 2, 2015, location and time to be determined.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:34 p.m.