

Special Meeting of the  
Probate Court Budget Committee  
Minutes

Tuesday, November 24, 2020  
5:00 p.m.

Office of the Probate Court Administrator  
186 Newington Road  
West Hartford, CT 06110

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m. by Judge Beverly Streit-Kefalas. The meeting was conducted in-person and by telephone conference.

**Present:** Judge Beverly Streit-Kefalas, Probate Court Administrator and Chair, Judge Fred Anthony, Judge Philip A. Wright, Jr.

**Public Comment and Correspondence**

Public comment was opened and inquired by roll call to court personnel in each individual court.

**Remarks by the Chair**

Judge Streit-Kefalas remarked that Connecticut COVID-19 cases are spiking to rates higher than those experienced in the spring of 2020. With the holidays approaching, public health officials have been warning to limit gatherings and restrict travel yet over the past weekend, TSA reported the largest increase in air traffic since March 2020.

Probate Courts are essential and must continue in operations while protecting the health and safety of court staff. Through a number of plans, the Probate Court Budget Committee has balanced the needs of the courts and the safety of court staff. The courts have limited or restricted in-person access and hearings, have been retrofitted with protective barriers, and have made other health and safety adjustments. Public health protocols are followed that include the wearing of masks, frequent hand-washing and maintaining an appropriate social distance.

As Connecticut enters the ninth month of the coronavirus pandemic, we have learned that how we live in our personal lives can impact our colleagues at our courts. Types of encounters previously considered low risk are now high risk. Despite taking extreme care and following all precautions, inadvertent exposures are leading to positive cases. 96% of the state or 145 towns are on red alert.

To protect the health and safety of the judges and court staff as cases continue to rise and are predicted to spike during the holiday season, Judge Streit-Kefalas recommended to the Budget Committee an Emergency Compensation Plan to begin on 11/28/2020 and end on 12/11/2020 as a two-week pause post-Thanksgiving.

## **COVID-19 Compensation and Benefits**

### EMERGENCY COMPENSATION PLAN

FOR PAY PERIOD ENDING DECEMBER 11, 2020

Due to the continued and rising spread of COVID-19, the Probate Court Budget Committee authorizes an Emergency Compensation Plan for the pay period beginning November 28, 2020 and ending December 11, 2020, in the event the judge elects to adopt a working cohort schedule.

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

Judges may establish two separate and exclusive working cohorts in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19. If established, court staff members, other than temporary employees and rehired retirees, shall work fifty (50%) percent of their regularly scheduled hours during the pay period. They will be compensated for the balance of their regularly scheduled hours under the C19 Facility compensation code.

For payroll purposes, the Judge or Chief Clerk shall furnish the working cohorts and schedule to the PCA Financial Services Department.

Courts that do not elect to adopt a working cohort schedule will continue to adhere to attendance reporting under PCA Policy 303. Court staff will be compensated for actual time worked at the court and may use available accruals for the balance of their regularly scheduled hours, with the advance approval of the judge. C19 Facility compensation does not apply.

Court staff will continue to have uninterrupted health insurance coverage.

Court staff members may be eligible for leave as provided in Policy 903 and/or under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA).

Temporary employees and rehired retirees will be paid for actual hours worked in the Probate Court.

#### PROCEDURES

For this pay period, if a judge has elected to adopt a working cohort schedule, both non-work hours and actual hours worked in the Probate Court (equivalent to regularly scheduled hours) must be entered in the payroll time and attendance reporting system for both non-exempt and exempt employees. Non-exempt and exempt employees are defined in Policy 102. Note that this is a change in the usual procedure for exempt employees.

If a judge has not elected to adopt a working cohort schedule, court staff will continue to adhere to attendance reporting under PCA Policy 303.

### **Motion**

A motion was made by Judge Anthony to approve the Emergency Compensation Plan as presented. Judge Wright seconded the motion.

### **Discussion on the Motion**

Judge Anthony remarked in favor of the proposal that proactively protects the health and safety of court staff during the surge in COVID-19 cases while respecting judges' discretion in evaluating and managing their court operations.

Judge Wright spoke in favor of the proposal that permits judges the opportunity to protect staff from a highly contagious virus as well as protect individual courts from having to close completely should an outbreak occur.

Judge Streit-Kefalas remarked that even with the best of intentions and adherence to safety protocols, people are becoming infected. Judges have the opportunity to evaluate their court facilities and operations to best protect the health and safety of court staff.

A vote was called by Judge Streit-Kefalas and all voted in favor of the Emergency Compensation Plan beginning on 11/28/2020 and ending on 12/11/2020.

### **Adjournment**

Judge Anthony moved to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Judge Wright. The meeting was adjourned at 5:24 p.m.