# Regular Meeting of the Probate Court Budget Committee Minutes

Wednesday, December 8, 2021 4:00 p.m.

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

The meeting was called to order by Judge Streit-Kefalas at 4:00 p.m. The meeting was conducted in-person and by telephone conference.

#### Present

Judge Beverly Streit-Kefalas, Probate Court Administrator and Chair, Judge Fred Anthony, and Judge Philip Wright, Jr. Also present: Lisa Hansen, Director of Financial Services, and Jim Polites, Manager of Communications and Intergovernmental Relations.

### **Public Comment and Correspondence**

Judge Streit-Kefalas inquired for public comment by roll call to each Probate District. There was correspondence from Judge Berkenstock (PD-14) and Judge Wright addressed to the Committee. Pat Chase (PD-41) offered comment on business before the Committee.

## Remarks by the Chair

Judge Streit-Kefalas remarked that the State of Connecticut continues to report a budget surplus, with current trends projected to continue in the near term. During the 2021 legislative session, the General Assembly passed a two-year budget for FY22 and FY23 which included approval of the Probate Court request for General Fund (GF) appropriation. Given the budget surplus, the current Probate Court GF appropriation, and stabilization of Probate fees (which account for 75% of system revenue) following the challenges of the pandemic, Judge Streit-Kefalas remains cautiously optimistic, and recommends favorable action on today's business before the Committee.

#### **Compensation Plan Adjustment**

In continued recognition of the dedicated work of Probate Court staff and in accordance with Probate Court Assembly Policy 101, *Staff Compensation Adjustments*, Judge Streit-Kefalas asked for a motion for approval of a 3.0% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), to be implemented beginning January 2022. Combined with merit increases approved by the Budget Committee at its June 16, 2021 meeting, Judge Streit-Kefalas said this would result in a total annual compensation adjustment in Fiscal Year End 06/30/2022 of 6.0% for eligible Probate Court employees.

A motion was made by Judge Wright to approve the COLA recommendation as presented. Judge Anthony seconded the motion.

After a call for a discussion on the motion, Judge Anthony recognized the continuing efforts of Probate Court staff under challenging circumstances and added that while the Committee is mindful of limited resources, the COLA is deserved and he is happy to support the motion.

Judge Wright echoed Judge Anthony's remarks, and credited Judge Streit-Kefalas with continuing to prioritize support for Probate Court staff.

Judge Streit-Kefalas thanked court staff for their continued dedication and delivery of high-quality service to residents throughout the state.

Judge Streit-Kefalas called for a vote. The motion carried unanimously, no abstentions.

## **Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2023 Office Budgets**

Judge Streit-Kefalas offered the following guidelines on FY23 proposed budget assumptions:

Education / Seminars / Meetings \$600 per district

\$600 per RCPC + \$200 per family specialist

Dues
Other = \$25 per person\*

\*Suggested use: CAPC membership

• Subscriptions Court proposal, subject to \$1,500 maximum

• Other Expenses \$500 per district

The motion to approve the proposed Guidelines for Office Budgets as presented was made by Judge Anthony, seconded by Judge Wright and approved unanimously.

#### **Staffing Level Adjustment**

Judge Streit-Kefalas asked for a motion on a proposed adjustment to staffing for the Central Connecticut Regional Children's Probate Court (CCRCPC), recommending the addition of one full time assistant clerk and one full time family specialist.

A motion was made by Judge Anthony to approve the recommendation as presented. Judge Streit-Kefalas seconded the motion.

After a call for a discussion on the motion, Judge Wright remarked that since the CCRCPC was formed in 2009, Region 14, Cheshire-Southington (PD-18), Saybrook (PD-33), and Berlin (PD-8) have joined, resulting in an increase of approximately 150% in the population served. Judge Wright considers the recommended staffing adjustment a necessity in order to continue the high level of service provided to children and families.

Judge Anthony remarked that CCRCPC staff deserve credit for their continued excellent work given the increased case intake, and believes the request is appropriate.

Judge Streit-Kefalas remarked that given the increase in CCRCPC participating courts and cases, the proposed staffing adjustment is merited.

Judge Streit-Kefalas called for a vote. The motion to approve by Judge Anthony, seconded by Judge Streit-Kefalas, carried with abstention by Judge Wright.

#### **Other Business**

None

## **Set 2023 Meeting Schedule**

Judge Streit-Kefalas, Judge Anthony, and Judge Wright agreed that the next Budget Committee meetings will take place on March 16, 2022, June 8, 2022, and December 14, 2022.

## Adjournment

Judge Streit-Kefalas requested a motion to adjourn. The motion was moved by Judge Wright and seconded by Judge Anthony. The motion carried unanimously, no abstentions.

The meeting adjourned at 4:29 p.m.