

Probate Court Budget Committee

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 4, 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 5:03 p.m.

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

Compensation Study Implementation Policies

Judge Knierim explained that the purpose of the Compensation Study Proposed Implementation Policies (copy attached) is to establish how changes to the pay ranges for each position will translate into changes to the rates of pay for individual employees. The goal of the proposed policies is to increase the competitiveness of the pay plan in a manner that is consistent with the findings of the 2013 internal pay equity study.

Judge Knierim noted that the budget committee used the pay equity study to increase the rates of pay of employees who were underpaid in relation to length of service in the Probate Courts. Employees whose pay rates were higher than the rate calculated in the equity study did not, however, receive pay cuts. To avoid perpetuating legacy pay disparities, the proposed policies would factor in the amounts by which employees were previously determined to be above their equity study rates.

Andrea King explained that PCA has identified six different categories of employees for purposes of implementing the compensation study. The categories and the proposed methods of calculating pay adjustments for each are detailed in the attachment. The pay of an employee who was hired at minimum after the uniform pay plan went into effect or who received an equity study adjustment would be increased by the same percentage as the increase in the range for his or her position. For an employee whose rate exceeded the equity study rate or whose pay was above maximum, the percentage increase for the position would be applied to an updated equity study rate rather than the employee's current rate. The updated equity study rate would be the sum of the equity study rate plus all COLA and merit increases that the employee has received since the equity study. A one-time adjustment is proposed for retired rehires to bring uniformity among employees in this category.

The estimated cost of the compensation study using the proposed implementation policies is \$1.1 million. The committee will defer action on the policies until the state and Probate Court system budgets are finalized. The committee plans to act on the

proposed policies on June 10, but will reschedule the meeting if the budgets have not been approved by that date.

In the interim, PCA will distribute materials to assist employees in understanding the proposed policies and calculating their adjustments.

Public Comment and Correspondence

Letter from Judge Kurt Ahlberg, Stratford Probate Court
Martha Gothers, Assistant Clerk, Hartford Probate Court
Pat Saviano, Chief Clerk, Danbury Probate Court, and President of CAPC

Fiscal Year 2015-16 Office Budgets

Andrea King explained the proposed court office budgets for fiscal year 2015-16. The proposal is based on the guidelines that the committee adopted in December and individual court submissions. Ms. King noted that the office budgets differ from prior years in that funding for Probate Assembly dues has been eliminated. Judge Knierim indicated that the assembly is currently reviewing its organizational structure as a result of the state audit and that the funding mechanism will be determined once that process is complete.

Judge Marino made a motion to approve the fiscal year 2015-16 office budgets. Judge Anthony seconded the motion. Judge Knierim called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Staffing Level Adjustments

Judge Knierim explained proposed staffing level adjustments for the Trumbull and Stratford Probate Courts. The recommended change for Trumbull would increase benchmark staffing by 0.8 overall and enable the court to hire an additional full-time assistant clerk. Judge Knierim indicated that he had been working with Judge Rowe for over a year to assess the court's needs and that the increase is justified based on the court's weighted workload trend over three years. The proposed adjustment for Stratford would substitute a full-time assistant clerk position for the existing court assistant position, with no net change in benchmark staffing. Judge Knierim indicated that the change would align the position allocation in Stratford with other similarly-sized courts.

Judge Marino made a motion to approve the staffing level adjustments. Judge Anthony seconded the motion. Judge Knierim called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Impact of January 2015 COLA

Andrea King presented a summary report on the January 2015 cost of living adjustment. The 3% COLA was implemented on the January 8, 2015 pay date. A total of 292 court employees received the full COLA and 5 received a partial increase because their rates

of pay were higher than maximum for their positions. The budget impact of the COLA is \$368,000.

July 2015 Merit Pay Adjustments

Judge Marino made a motion to approve 3% funding for July 2015 merit increases if the state budget provides adequate funding. Judge Anthony seconded the motion. Judge Knierim called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

None

Schedule Next Meeting

The committee will meet on June 10, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. The committee tentatively scheduled a special meeting on September 30, 2015.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Compensation Study Proposed Implementation Policies

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Introduction

To implement the compensation study, the budget committee will need to adopt policies to determine how changes to the pay ranges will affect the rates of pay of individual employees. In developing those policies, careful consideration of the findings of the internal pay equity study, which was completed in 2013, is warranted. The budget committee used the pay equity study to increase the rates of pay of employees who were underpaid in relation to length of service in the Probate Courts. At the same time, the committee decided against reducing the pay of employees whose pay rates were higher than the rate as calculated in the equity study. In light of this key decision, the compensation study implementation policies will need to address the treatment of employees previously determined to be above the equity study rate in a way that avoids perpetuating legacy pay disparities among employees.

Equity Study Background

In 2013, the compensation consultant performed a calculation for each eligible employee to determine an equity study rate based on the employee's years of service. Service was calculated as of January 5, 2011, the date on which the uniform compensation system became effective. Pay adjustments were calculated using a hybrid approach that considered both experience in the employee's current position and prior experience in other positions within the Probate Court system. Employees were credited with 100% of their service in the current position and 40% of their service in prior positions.

An employee whose pay was less than the equity study rate received an increase to match the target. If an employee's pay was found to be higher than the equity study rate, the employee's pay was not reduced. A total of 138 employees received equity pay increases and 108 employees were found to be already above the equity study rate.

The following categories of employees were excluded from the equity study:

1. Employees hired on or after January 5, 2011, when the uniform compensation system was already in place
2. Employees whose rates of pay were at or above maximum for the position
3. Temporary employees
4. Rehired retirees

At the time the equity study was conducted, the Probate Court system employed 341 individuals, of which 95 were in one of the excluded categories.

Compensation Study Pay Range Adjustments

In 2014, the budget committee embarked on a compensation study to evaluate the competitiveness of the compensation plan. The compensation consultant, Owen-Pottier, Inc. recommended revised pay ranges for each of the 11 staff positions. The percentage increases to the pay ranges vary by position, as follows:

Position	Compensation Study Percentage
Chief Clerk III	9%
Chief Clerk II	6%
Chief Clerk I	9%
Staff Attorney	12%
Deputy Clerk	13%
Clerk	8%
Assistant Clerk	15%
Court Assistant	5%
Security Officer	5%
Lead PCO	27%
PCO	25%

The proposed implementation policies outlined below seek to translate the changes in pay ranges into adjustments in the rates of pay for individual employees, taking into consideration the equity study findings.

Proposed Policies

GROUP 1 – Employees hired PRIOR to January 5, 2011 who were below their target rates and received equity adjustments in 2013 (116 employees):

Increase the hourly rate of each Group 1 employee by the compensation study percentage for the employee's position.

GROUP 2 – Employees hired PRIOR to January 5, 2011 who DID NOT receive an equity adjustment in 2013 because their hourly rates at the time were higher than the equity study rates (90 employees):

First calculate an updated equity study rate by adding all COLA and merit raises to the 2013 equity study rate. Then calculate the compensation study hourly rate for each employee by applying the compensation study percentage for the employee's position to the updated equity study rate. The employee will receive the greater of the compensation study hourly rate or the employee's current rate.

GROUP 3 – Employees hired PRIOR to January 5, 2011 who were grandfathered because their hourly rates were higher than the maximum (17 employees):
Calculate adjustments for Group 3 in the same manner as Group 2. PCA will need to collect employment histories for Group 3 because this group was excluded from the equity study in 2013.

GROUP 4 – Employees hired SINCE January 5, 2011 who were hired at the minimum for their positions (71 employees):

Increase the hourly rate of each Group 4 employee by the compensation study percentage for the employee's position.

The adjustment will apply to employees who were hired before July 1, 2015. Employees hired on or after July will receive an increase to the new minimum for the position.

GROUP 5 – Employees hired SINCE January 5, 2011 who were hired ABOVE the minimum for their positions (8 employees):

On September 28, 2011, the budget committee adopted a policy requiring new hires from outside the system to start at the minimum for the position. Several employees were hired above minimum before the policy became effective. Calculate the compensation study rate for these employees by applying the compensation study percentage to an adjusted hourly rate equal to the sum of the minimum for the position plus all merit and COLA increases.

GROUP 6 – Rehired retirees (16 employees):

Make a one-time adjustment to standardize rates for rehired retirees at the following updated market rates, provided that the rate does not exceed the employee's pre-retirement rate of pay:

- *\$25.79 Clerk*
- *\$22.74 Assistant Clerk*
- *\$18.83 Court Assistant*

Temporary and floating clerk positions held by rehired retirees would be treated as Assistant Clerk positions.

PROMOTIONS

If an employee in Group 2, 3 or 5 was promoted on or after January 5, 2011, calculate the adjustment as if the employee was hired at minimum in the original position and add the promotion increase, along with the COLA and merit increases, before applying the compensation study factor.

Proposed Compensation Study Implementation Schedule

Implementation is contingent upon budgetary approval.

June – State budget and Probate Court system budget finalized

June 10 – Budget committee meeting

July 9 – Pay date with merit increases (pay period beginning 6/20/15, ending 7/3/15)

September 11 – Distribute report showing hourly rate changes for each employee (by employee number rather than name)

September 25 – Due date for comment or questions

September 30 – Special budget committee meeting (tentative)

October 29 – Payroll date with changes processed (pay period beginning 10/10/15)

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