

## **Probate Court Rules Advisory Committee**

### **Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, March 18, 2021

The meeting was convened at 4:05 p.m. by Judge Beverly Streit-Kefalas, Probate Court Administrator and Chair.

Other members in attendance via Cisco Webex: Attorney Molly Ackerly, Judge Peter Barrett, Attorney Douglas Brown, Attorney Evan Brunetti, Professor Jeffrey Cooper, Attorney Heather Dostaler, Attorney James Dougherty, Attorney Christopher Hug, Attorney Gabriella Kiniry, Attorney Andrew Knott, Judge Kathleen Maxham, Judge John McGrath, Jr., Attorney Melissa Nixon, Mr. Stephen Pedneault, Attorney Carmine Perri, Judge Robert Randich, Attorney Greta Solomon, Ms. Suzette Threet, Judge Steven Zelman( Ret.) and Attorney Kimberly Zigich.

Members not in attendance: Attorney Caitlyn Calder and Judge Brian Mahon (Ret.)

Also in attendance: Chief Counsel Bonnie Bennet

#### **Remarks of the Chair**

Judge Streit-Kefalas welcomed committee members. She acknowledged the passing of Attorney Pat Kaplan, who had been a valuable member of the committee for many years. Judge Streit-Kefalas also recognized the contributions to the committee of Chief Counsel Bonnie Bennet, who will be retiring at the end of the month, and announced the appointment of Heather Dostaler as Chief Counsel, effective upon Bonnie's retirement.

#### **Subcommittee Chairs and Member Introductions**

Since there are several new members and new chairs of the three subcommittees, Judge Streit-Kefalas invited the members to introduce themselves, including Judge Kathleen Maxham, chair of Subcommittee I; Judge Peter Barrett, chair of Subcommittee II; and Judge Robert Randich, chair of Subcommittee III.

#### **Role of Advisory Committee**

Judge Streit-Kefalas highlighted the role of the Advisory Committee and the purpose of the Probate Court Rules of Procedure.

The committee, comprised of judges, clerks, court users and attorneys, provide invaluable advice and input to the Probate Court Administrator concerning court procedures and best practices in developing recommendations of rules for adoption and promulgation by the Judges of the Supreme Court. The purpose of the rules is to promote fairness, ease of use and access to justice. The rules also promote uniformity throughout the Probate Court system.

In response to questions from subcommittee chairs and members of the committee, Judge Streit-Kefalas stated that the organization, structure and committee assignments are similar to past years. She invited members to contact her if they wish to serve on a different committee this year.

### **Subcommittee Subject Areas and List of Issues**

Judge Streit-Kefalas shared that the list of issues that was disseminated to the committee represented suggestions from various stakeholders since the publication of the 2020 edition of the rules. She invited members to provide any additional suggestions, which would be added to the list of issues and sent to the members. A number of additional issues have been presented and will be added for discussion.

### **Timeline**

The anticipated timeline for the work of the subcommittees is to complete the review of any proposed revisions to the rules by late June or early July in order to schedule a public hearing in the fall. Judge Streit-Kefalas informed the members that the Judicial Branch is proposing legislation this session to authorize a committee of three probate judges to conduct the public hearing on the proposed rules, which will be presented to the Judges of the Supreme Court for their approval.

A representative of the Office of the Probate Court Administrator will serve on each subcommittee to assist the chair with scheduling Webex meetings, managing the subcommittee agenda, and keeping minutes. The chairs were asked to schedule their first meeting in the next two weeks.

### **Other Business**

None

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.