

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 10, 2021

Attendees: Judges Anthony, Barrett, Berkenstock, Blick, Brandt, Daly, Darby, DeGennaro, Fox, Ganim, Gardner Riordan, Jalowiec, Marino, Maxham, McGrath, Randich, Rowe and Wright, and also Probate Court Administrator Judge Streit-Kefalas, Manager of Communications Melissa Riley, Chief Counsel Bonnie Bennet.

1. **Call to Order:**

Due to the continued public health emergency, the meeting was held remotely via Cisco Webex video conferencing and was called to order at 9:47 AM.

2. **Approval of the Minutes:**

A motion was made by Judge DeGennaro seconded by Judge Gardner-Riordan and carried with one abstention from Judge Blick to accept the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of February 10, 2021 as presented.

3. **Correspondence:**

Judge Brandt reported that he had received no correspondence. Judge Streit-Kefalas reported she also had not received any correspondence.

4. **Committee Reports:**

Ethics

No Report

Nominating

Judge Marino affirmed that the full slate of officers, Executive Committee members, Budget Committee members and Council on Judicial Ethics Committee members have been presented and will be put up for a vote on at the April Assembly meeting.

Planning

No Report.

Procedures Review

Judge Berkenstock reported that the Committee met on March 1, 2021 and carried on with its usual business of making minor edits and changes to forms and clarifying instructions in an effort to make forms more user-friendly.

Public Information

Judge Blick reported that this Committee had its first meeting that was very productive. The Committee is updating information boards used by Judges and revising and updating other public materials among other projects.

Legislative

Judge Fox reported that the General Assembly is now in session. The Committee

Chairs receive almost daily updates from PCA and Pete Smith. Nothing has yet been raised in either chamber. Bills of interest continue to be monitored. Judge Streit-Kefalas has been testifying on various bills of interest. The Committee will continue to monitor bills of interest for the Assembly. Judge Fox indicated that by April the Committee will be aware of the bills that have legs and will keep the Executive Committee informed.

The judges had a short discussion about the Grandparent's Rights Bill. Judge Fox indicated that this bill has been discussed for several years and the Committee will continue to monitor it. No position has been taken by the Committee. Judge Streit-Kefalas indicated that this bill is not impactful on probate court matters; it being a family court issue.

Continuing Education

Judge Brandt thanked Judges Marino and Wexler for their presentation on mental health issues at the last webinar. Upcoming webinars are on March 18 at 10:00 A.M., Case Law update and another on March 31, at 1:00 P.M. on Mediation. The Committee will meet again next week. Judge Brandt confirmed that all Continuing Education seminars will be virtual through June 2021. Bonnie Bennet suggested that all Judges attend the webinars to help reach the required continuing education hours for this year. The joint seminar with the CBA is being planned for November at the Aqua Turf Club.

AD HOC COMMITTEES

Conservator Guidelines

Judge DeGennaro indicated that the Committee should meet and review the rules.

Hospitality

Judge DeGennaro reported that once we get back to in-person seminars in particular the Assembly meeting in September he is hopeful to have an afternoon meeting in order to have a social event afterwards.

Court Security

No Report

Floating Clerks

No Report.

Judge Brandt requested all judges who chair a Committee to deliver a report at the annual meeting in April.

5. Comments of the Probate Court Administrator:

Judge Streit-Kefalas reminded all judges on the panel of mediators to attend the March 31, 2021 Continuing Ed webinar given by Hon. Robert L. Holzberg who is an expert in this field. She reported that the first meeting of Advisory Committee for the Probate Court Rules of Procedure will take place on March 18. This Committee will be reviewing procedures for the July 2022 edition of the rules. Send comments to Bonnie Bennet or her.

Judge Streit-Kefalas indicated that PCA sent out an email to court-appointed attorneys and conservators to clarify the restrictions on indoor visitation at nursing homes. Visitation is restricted only if the nursing home is in outbreak mode. Indoor visitation is allowed as long as the facility is not in that mode.

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that the Budget Committee met last night. It was a very short meeting and included the approval of office budgets and a clarification of the 903 leave policy.

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that she testified in favor of the Connecticut Parentage Act. It is a comprehensive act which addresses several constitutional issues in Connecticut parentage laws for equal protection for all children and parents regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity marriage status. If this bill passes PCA will supply appropriate guidance and training to the Courts.

A Fiscal Note was just posted on RB 6382 now retitled An Act Concerning Probate Court Employees.

Judge Streit-Kefalas attended a hearing with the Appropriation Sub-Committee co-chaired by Senator Winfield and Representative Candlora who are well versed in probate court needs. While both are supportive of our position and need for full funding, Judges still need to reach out to local legislators on this issue. The PCA allocation as it stands now is \$13.5 million for 2022 and \$13.4 million for 2023. Talking points will be distributed for outreach to local legislators.

Vaccination eligibility is now based solely on age and the only employment status is for first responders or those in education system. Judge Streit-Kefalas advised all to establish a good relationship with their local health directors. Some districts have a wait list so doses are not wasted at the end of vaccination clinics.

Judge Streit-Kefalas reiterated her position that a significant characteristic of our courts is the personal, compassionate in-person attention to the public and parties that come before us. She reported that the Executive Orders 7f and 7k that allowed probate court to suspend in-person hearing will expire on April 19, 2021 at the end of the day. Judges should start preparing their courts for the shift to in-person proceedings while maintaining social distancing and other safety protocols. Judges should reach out to Melissa Riley at PCA for any assistance with facilities protocols. Take advantage of larger conference rooms in town halls to maximize distancing.

Judge Daly inquired about opening of group homes either run by DDS or private vendors. Judge Streit-Kefalas will get that information to all Judges.

The Judges discussed the ramifications of the suspension of the executive order considering town hall closures and the fact that all staff may not be fully vaccinated. Judge Streit-Kefalas assured the judges that the Cisco Webex video platform will still be

available to the courts for use in appropriate circumstances. Courts will be picking up the monthly expenses of Webex going forward.

6. Comments of the President Judge:

Judge Brandt reminded everyone of the Annual Meeting on April 21, 2021 at which Chief Justice Robinson will be speaking. Awards will be distributed and even though it will be remote it should be an active and engaging meeting.

Our June Assembly meeting has been moved to Wednesday June 23, 2021 (from June 17) to avoid a conflict with the CBA's annual legal conference.

Judge Brandt thanked (in addition to Judge Streit-Kefalas) Judge DeGennaro who testified before the Labor Committee and Judges Wexler, Wright, Norris and Graves who have testified before the Appropriations Committee.

He expressed his deep appreciation individually and on behalf of the Executive Committee to Bonnie Bennet for always being a great resource as a former Judge and expert in probate law. Bonnie Bennet stated it was a great honor and privilege to serve and thank you and farewell.

Judge Brandt reminded those present that there is both an Executive Committee meeting and Annual meeting in April.

7. Other Business to come before the Executive Committee:

None

8. Adjournment:

By consensus of the body, the meeting ended at 10:44 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Hon. Kathleen N. Maxham
Recording Secretary