

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**December 9, 2020**

Attendees: Judges Anthony, Barrett, Becker, Berkenstock, Brandt, Calabrese, Daly, Darby, DeGennaro, Gardner Riordan, Jalowiec, Magistrali, Maxham, McGrath, Schad, 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 in person and remotely via Cisco WebEx video conferencing and was called to order at 9:55 AM.

**2. Approval of the Minutes:**

A motion was made by Judge Daly seconded by Judge Wright and unanimously carried to accept the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of November 4, 2020 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:**

Continuing Education

Judge Becker reported that the Committee met on November 23, 2020 and decided that remote WebEx seminars would be scheduled for at least the first quarter of 2021 for continuing education requirements.

Judge Brandt commented on the great presentations the Committee was able to provide, especially the last two WebEx seminars with Chief Justice Robinson and Dr. Morgan. Judge Becker reported that the platform worked well.

Judge Daly commented that the last two WebEx seminars were great. As chair of the committee which recently waived the continuing education requirements, she also inquired about the size of the attendance at these presentations. Judge Becker responded that there were over 100 participants at the last two seminars. Judge DeGennaro reported that over 40 judges attended the WebEx seminar on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. Bonnie Bennet confirmed that certificates for in-person attendance will be issued after judges submit their compliance reports. All WebEx seminar attendance has been reported in Paychex and the system will provide a report of seminars attended.

Ethics

No Report.

Legislative

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that the Committee had a productive meeting in November. The Probate Court Operations bill presented in the last session with a few additional items will be raised and the two-year biennial budget will be addressed.

Now that all election results have been certified, Judge Streit-Kefalas encouraged all judges to develop relationships with their legislators to educate them on the work of the courts and cost savings to the state. Talking points will be provided to the judges by the Committee.

Probate Administration and the Legislative Committee continue to work with leadership of the Appropriations Committee on the need for General Fund appropriations. The session opens on January 6, 2021 and information on how to participate will be forthcoming.

#### Nominating

Judge McGrath indicated he had no report. Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that Judge Marino, as chair of the Committee, intends to present a slate at the full Assembly meeting in January nominating Judge Magistrali as a full member on the Council on Probate Judicial Conduct and Judge Elisa Bartlett as the alternate.

#### Planning

Judge Anthony indicated that he will call a Committee meeting after the first of the year.

#### Procedures Review

No Report.

#### Public Information

No Report.

### **AD HOC COMMITTEES**

#### Conservator Guidelines

No Report.

#### Court Security

No Report.

#### Floating Clerks

No Report.

#### Hospitality

No Report.

#### Modifications for Pandemic/Extraordinary Circumstances

No Report.

### **5. Comments of the Probate Court Administrator:**

Judge Streit-Kefalas commented on the excellent presentation by Dr. Morgan and Chief Justice Robinson. She indicated that the information provided by the Chief Justice was important. She encouraged everyone to be aware of our individual implicit biases and reminded all to address these issues on a daily basis. She encouraged all judges and court staff to look at issues from the

other person's perspective in order to overcome our biases and work toward inclusivity. Judge Streit-Kefalas encouraged the judges to take the bias tests developed by Harvard University as mentioned by Chief Justice Robinson in his presentation. Raising our awareness and cultural competency is especially important in the current climate.

The two new Judges have begun their education in the New Judges Institute. She expressed her regret that the system must lose Judges Dorval and Kepple but is looking forward to working with Judge-Elect Hamzy and Leamon and what the new judges will bring to our system.

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that Jane Obert retired as of December 1, 2020 and is looking forward to spending time with her grandchildren and family. Sue Dornfried has finalized her retirement plans and will leave on February 1, 2021 and will fill her time with family and her new home. She has been an indispensable person for our probate assembly. Sue has been the go-to person and the receptacle of all historical information for our Probate Assembly. Judge Streit-Kefalas encouraged all to reach out to her before her departure.

The biennial budget is next on the agenda. Judge Streit-Kefalas is continuing the dialogue with the Appropriations Committee stressing the work we have carried on despite the pandemic in continuing to meet the needs of our critical constituents and also saving the State over \$1.5 billion annually.

The State's and nation's COVID-19 numbers are continuing to escalate and we have not yet reached the projected peak for the second wave. She encouraged all to continue to wear masks, social distance and wash hands frequently. Vaccinations will begin soon but in limited amounts. Increased numbers of exposures in the courts have been reported.

Judge Streit-Kefalas wished Happy Holidays to all; 2020 has been a difficult but still amazing year and she expressed thanks to the court staff and judges for their hard work.

**Comments of the President Judge:**

Judge Brandt wished everyone a happy and safe holiday season. He encouraged all to stay safe, heed warnings and enjoy the holiday season.

**6. Other Business to come before the Executive Committee:**

Judge Streit-Kefalas reminded everyone of the Probate Court Budget Committee meeting slated to take place at 5:00 PM.

**7. Adjournment:**

A motion to adjourn was made by Judge Magistrali seconded by Judge Wright and unanimously approved. The meeting ended at 10:19 AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Hon. Kathleen N. Maxham  
Recording Secretary