

CONNECTICUT PROBATE ASSEMBLY MEETING
January 27, 2021

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Judge Brandt at 11:51 a.m.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance** was led by Chief Counsel Bonnie Bennet.

Roll call of the Judges

Thirty six judges were present by Cisco Webex video conference for the meeting, including Probate Court Administrator Judge Streit-Kefalas. Attorneys Bonnie Bennett, Heather Dostaler and Evan Brunetti, Director of Communications Melissa Riley, Judge-Elect Beth Leamon and Sue Dornfried also attended.

3. **Approval of the November 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes**
Judge Magistrali moved and Judge Wright seconded a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.
4. **Report of the Treasurer**
Judge Magistrali presented a Quarterly Treasurer's Report for the period from October 2020 to December 2020 reflecting the budget adopted at the annual meeting and showing no activity. Judge Gardner Riordan moved and Judge Yamin seconded a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. The motion passed unanimously.
5. **Report of Nominating Committee**
Judge Marino thanked all judges who stepped up and agreed to serve as Officers of the Assembly and on the Executive Committee, Budget Committee and Council on Probate Judicial Conduct. He placed the following judges' names in nomination to be elected in accordance with the by-laws at the annual meeting on April 21, 2021:

OFFICERS:

TERM 2021-2022

President-Judge HONORABLE MICHAEL R. BRANDT
First Vice President-Judge HONORABLE EVELYN M. DALY
Second Vice President-Judge HONORABLE MICHAEL M. DARBY
Executive Secretary HONORABLE LEAH P. SCHAD
Recording Secretary HONORABLE KATHLEEN N. MAXHAM
Treasurer HONORABLE ROBERT A. RANDICH

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Term: 2021 - 2024

Litchfield County HONORABLE MICHAEL F. MAGISTRALI
Middlesex County HONORABLE JEANNINE M. LEWIS
Tolland County HONORABLE BARBARA GARDNER RIORDAN

BUDGET COMMITTEE:

Term: 2021 - 2023

HONORABLE FRED J. ANTHONY

COUNCIL ON PROBATE JUDICIAL CONDUCT:

Term: 4/2021 – 4/2025

HONORABLE MICHAEL F. MAGISTRALI
HONORABLE ELISA H. BARTLETT (*Alternate*)

Judge Brandt nominated the slate. No nominations were received from the floor. A motion was made and carried to close the nominations. Judge Brandt confirmed that the election will be conducted on April 21, 2021 at the Annual Meeting.

6. Committee Reports

Continuing Education

Judge Becker reported that continuing education webinars will continue to be presented through June 2021. She advised everyone to check their emails for a proposed schedule of webinars through June. Evan Brunetti has been very helpful to the Committee especially in varying the days and times to accommodate all judges' schedules. Judge Becker asked all present to continue to send her suggestions for future webinars. She is planning for an in person seminar for the September Assembly meeting.

Ethics

Judge Magistrali reported that the Ethics Committee has not met and there is no report from the Committee.

Legislative

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that the legislative session commenced three weeks ago and was ramping up. Some bills have been drafted and raised. She will keep the judges posted as to how the session is going. The Judiciary Committee has met but only dealt with judicial nominations and procedural issues and have not reviewed any legislative bills so far. The Governor's budget goes to the General Assembly in two weeks at which time we will know if probate funding has been cut.

Judge Fox echoed the comments of Judge Streit-Kefalas. He reported that bills often change or are dropped after public hearings.

Nominating

No Report

Planning Committee

No Report

Procedures Review Committee

No Report

Public Information

No Report

Conservator Guidelines

No Report

Court Security

No Report

Floating Clerks

No Report

Hospitality

No Report

7. Remarks of the Probate Court Administrator

Judge Streit-Kefalas reminded all present that today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day, it being the day on which the Red Army liberated Auschwitz camp survivors. She asked everyone to be mindful of the 6 million Jews and 11 million others that were killed by the Nazis and collaborators. Based on recent events it is critical that we always remember the events of the Holocaust to ensure no acts of genocide occur in the future.

As mentioned earlier in the meeting, she will keep the Assembly posted on any legislative developments. The Emergency Compensation Plan approved on December 9, 2020 for cohorting schedules completed on January 22, 2021. Approximately 2/3 of the courts participated and the safety protocols put in place were likely beneficial in light of the post-holiday virus surge seen in Connecticut.

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that judges and staff have been designated as essential workers and qualify to receive the vaccine in Phase 1b. Phase 1b now comprises about half the population of Connecticut. She reported that Phase 1b is also being phased and only those 75 and older are presently eligible. There have been challenges for this population with registration even with the telephone system implemented. She predicted that Court staff and judges will be eligible by late February or early March. It is anticipated that registration will be through VAMS, an online platform created by the CDC. She expects that individuals will receive an email through their court email address alerting them to register for an appointment. Please know how to access work email at home. Information for this is on the Intranet. She reminded all to continue to adhere to the 3 W's: Wear a Mask (properly); Wash your hands; Watch your distance.

Judge Streit-Kefalas reported that Sue Dornfried's last day of work for PCA is Friday, January 29, 2021. Sue is retiring after 17 years of service to PCA. She has been the backbone of PCA, organizing all Assembly meetings and all committee meetings among many, many other tasks. She will be incredibly missed. Judge Streit-Kefalas wished Sue, incredible joy and incredible family time in the next part of her journey.

Sue Dornfried thanked the Assembly for everything the judges and staff have done for her. She thanked all for the pleasure of assisting the Assembly over the past 16+ years. Time went by so fast. It has been an honor and pleasure and she is grateful to all and invited judges to look her up at the beach if ever in Westbrook.

Judge Streit-Kefalas yielded her time to Chief Counsel Bonnie Bennet, who announced, with mixed emotions, that she will retire on April 1, 2021. She expressed that her 31 years in the probate system has been extremely rewarding. She served for over 16+ year as a judge and then had the privilege to serve the probate court system as attorney at PCA and then Chief Counsel. She said she is incredibly fortunate to have worked with wonderful people with staff and judges and PCA. She worked for three PCA Administrators and most recently with Judge Beverly Streit-Kefalas. She stated that Judge Beverly-Streit-Kefalas has possibly had the most challenging year and a half ever of any Administrator. She is grateful for her leadership. Bonnie became a grandmother in November. She said it is hard to close this professional chapter in her life, but knowing she had a great ride for the last 31 years makes it easier. She is grateful for the ability to serve the judges, courts and the people of Connecticut. Thanks to all, the staff and people of Connecticut.

Judge Streit-Kefalas stated that PCA has seen lots of transition over the past years, but will continue to grow and share the knowledge that Sue and Bonnie have shared. It will be hard, maybe impossible to fill their shoes. But these two individuals are most deserving of time with their families in retirement.

8. Remarks of the President-Judge

Judge Brandt thanked all for participation in the Assembly meeting. He is disappointed it could not be in person. Meetings will still be virtual for April and June but he indicated judges should plan an in-person meeting and seminar in September. He urged all to put all assembly and continuing education dates on calendars.

Judge Yamin reported that the May 2021 NCPJ meeting has been cancelled. A partial scaled down virtual conference is set for Thursday, May 13, 2021. Prerecorded webinars will be planned on issues related to the pandemic and mental health to also allow CLE credits for judges. She will keep the Assembly up to date on the webinars.

Judge Brandt reminded all that when things seem dismal a good moment occurs. He encouraged all to appreciate the good moments. He noted that, courts are open, judges and staff still have jobs and paychecks with benefits. He said that the courts serve our communities well. Everyone has much to be thankful for despite the pandemic. He especially wanted to express his thanks to Sue Dornfried. She emails him weekly and organizes these meetings and Executive Committee meetings with agendas and minutes and helps keep all meetings going smoothly. Judge Brandt, now more than ever, really appreciates Sue's behind the scene work. He also expressed his appreciation for Bonnie Bennet. He first met her as a judge, and all courts have all benefited from her knowledge and legal guidance throughout her time at PCA. She has been committed to the probate system and each of us as judges are better at what we do because of her work.

9. Any business to come before the Assembly

None

10. Adjourn

Motion was made and seconded and unanimously carried to adjourn at 12:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted with grateful appreciation to Sue Dornfried and Attorney Bonnie Bennet,

Hon. Kathleen N. Maxham
Recording Secretary