

# Probate Court Budget Committee

## Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 3, 2010  
4:00 PM

Library at the Office of the Probate Court Administrator  
186 Newington Road, West Hartford, CT

The meeting was convened at 4:07 PM.

In attendance: Judge Paul J. Knierim, Probate Court Administrator and Chair, Judge Joseph Marino and Judge Dianne Yamin.

PCA staff in attendance: Andrea King, Director of Financial Services, Attorney Bonnie Bennet, and Vincent Russo.

### **Public Comment**

Judge Knierim announced that the committee had received several pieces of correspondence.

Those submitting letters were:

The Hon. Martin Landgrebe, Judge of the New Milford Probate Court; the Waterbury Probate Court staff (Cynthia Gilbode, Chief Clerk, Maryann Ingala, Clerk, Ralph Shove, Deputy Clerk, Deborah Thibodeau, Asst. Clerk, Odeta Hoxha, Court Assistant, Gladys Vasquez, Court Assistant); Isabella Karash, Asst. Clerk of the West Haven Probate Court; the West Haven Probate Court staff (Maureen O'Connor, Clerk, Tracy Morrissey, Asst. Clerk, Gail Carroll, Asst. Clerk); Suzanne Pombar, Clerk of the New Hartford Probate Court; Leslie George, Clerk of the Branford Probate Court; Anne Holihan, Chief Clerk of the Bristol Probate Court; Penelope Ives, Asst. Clerk of the Branford Probate Court; and the Meriden Probate Court staff (Janet Firulli, Clerk of the Court, Dina Falis, Asst. Clerk)

Judge Knierim asked for comments from those in attendance.

Those making comments were:

Marianne Arancio Stilson, Chief Clerk of the New Milford Probate Court and the Vice President of the CT Association of Probate Clerks; Tina LaMorte, Staff Attorney of the Hartford Probate Court; Carol LePage, Clerk of the Plainville Probate Court; Cynthia Zdanzukis, Asst. Clerk of the Hartford Probate Court; Pat Saviano, Clerk of the Danbury Probate Court (submitted written testimony); Mary MacGregor, Clerk of the Glastonbury Probate Court and the President of the CT Association of Probate Clerks; Carol

Modugno, Asst. Clerk of the Manchester Probate Court; Susan Angelica, Clerk of Manchester Probate Court

### **Update on Objective Job Evaluation Process**

Linda Dow, of the Human Resource Unit of the Judicial Branch, gave an overview of the objective job evaluation process being used to update the job classifications and job descriptions for probate court staff. She and Vickie Marino, Job Classification Specialist at the Judicial Branch, have conducted desk audits at several probate courts to document the duties associated with various roles at the courts. Based upon that work, she recommends the addition of certain new positions to the existing job classification system and has drafted new job descriptions for all probate staff positions. (Posted on the website under "Job Classifications")

Bonnie Bennet discussed how the changes to the job classifications and job descriptions would relate to the existing compensation ranges. She has discussed the updates with the consultants who prepared the 2008 compensation study, who have indicated that the changes improve upon the existing structure and that they are able to update the compensation ranges to reflect the changes. Probate administration will engage the consultants to prepare new compensation ranges for the new job classifications.

### **Review Office Budget Data for the Regional Children's Courts**

Andrea King updated the committee on the data received from the courts concerning their office budgets. She has worked with the regional children's courts to prepare proposed budgets for fiscal year 2010-11 that are lower than the current fiscal year. (Posted on the website under ""Regional Children's Probate Courts Office Expenses")

Judges of merging courts have been asked to work with their colleagues to propose 6 month budgets for their merged courts, which proposals are due on February 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Approach and Timetable for Staffing Level Determinations**

Andrea King explained three spreadsheets that she has prepared to assist the committee in developing guidelines for staffing levels. (Posted on the web page under "Staffing Guidelines") The committee discussed other data that might be relevant in making staffing level determinations.

The committee members agreed that the committee would first establish general guidelines and then apply the guidelines to each court to arrive at a proposed staffing level. That information would then be sent to each court to enable courts to present additional information before the committee makes its final determinations.

### **Other Business**

It was agreed that it would be helpful to send a list of frequently asked questions and answers to all judges and staff to help answer inquiries that the committee has received. Probate administration will prepare the FAQs by the end of the week.

The committee discussed the preliminary policies on vacation, sick, personal days and holidays and the difficulties associated with the transition to an accrual system in January 2011. Judge Knierim explained several possible solutions to smooth the first year transition. The committee will review those options before the policies are finalized.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:53 PM.

The next meeting will be February 17, 2010 at 4 PM.