

MINUTES
STRATEGIC PLAN ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
April 29, 2010

The Strategic Plan Assessment Committee met in the Appellate Court Attorney Conference Room at 75 Elm Street in Hartford on Thursday, April 29, 2010 at 1:00 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Hon. Alexandra DiPentima (Chair), Hon. Patrick L. Carroll III, Hon. William T. Cremins, Hon. Frank M. D’Addabbo, Hon. Dennis G. Eveleigh, Hon. Brian T. Fischer, Hon. Barbara M. Quinn and Hon. Elliot N. Solomon.

In addition, Hon. Elizabeth A. Bozzuto, Hon. Raymond R. Norko, Atty. Karen A. Berris, Ms. Krista Hess, Atty. Nancy Kierstead and Ms. Shawna Woodard attended the meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Judge DiPentima at 1:20 p.m.

I. The committee reviewed and unanimously approved the minutes from the February 25, 2010 meeting.

II. Performance Measures

Jury – Judge D’Addabbo gave an overview of the work of the Jury Committee which developed four subcommittees (Before Court Appearance, Arrival at Court, Voire Dire, and Selected Jurors) that addressed the various stages of jury service. Judge D’Addabbo indicated that the Jury Committee developed thirty-five recommendations which have either been completed or are in progress. He indicated that there were successful pilot projects for improved juror utilization, and summoning has been reduced in some locations and measures are underway to address the issue in all courts. In addition, Judge D’Addabbo told the committee members that the Jury Communications Review Committee meets monthly to review publications as they come due for revision and to recommend new publications. The Committee is also identifying resources for the development of a new juror orientation video and is currently drafting an exit survey for jurors who have served jury duty.

Judge D’Addabbo indicated that a uniform policy for the retention and destruction of juror confidential questionnaires has been adopted and distributed to the courts. He told the Committee members that recommendations for improved juror facilities and the possible provision of counseling for jurors in stressful cases have not yet been undertaken because of current budgetary constraints.

Attorney Karen Berris presented to the Committee six potential performance measures for the recommendations, including the plan to reduce the number of canceled jurors.

ADA – Attorney D’Alesio indicated that Mr. Pat Caron and Ms. Sandra Lugo-Gines will present possible performance measures for ADA at the next Strategic Plan Assessment Committee meeting.

Self-Represented Parties – Judge Bozzuto and Judge Norko, who co-chaired the Committee on Self-Represented Parties, gave the members an overview of the work of the Self-Represented Parties Committee. Judge Bozzuto indicated that the Committee developed twenty-nine recommendations. She explained that many of these recommendations have been implemented and some are already in the process of being implemented. Judge Bozzuto indicated that many commonly used Judicial Branch forms and publications have been converted to plain language in order to help self-represented parties better understand various court processes. In addition, the Self-Represented Workgroup has developed a plain language flier that explains the short calendar marking process. She also said that the Self-Represented Workgroup has created and distributed letters that are customized for each judicial district for self-represented parties. She explained that the letters are mailed to self-represented parties who file an appearance and describe the role of the clerks’ office, the location of Court Service Centers and Law Libraries, and contact information for legal assistance when available and the local or state bar association’s lawyers referral service.

Judge Bozzuto also stated that the grouping of family forms has been completed and that the workgroup is currently developing instructions for the grouping of civil forms.

She also indicated that scripts are being drafted for a number of “how-to” videos that will guide self-represented parties through some of the basic procedures for civil and family cases. These videos will eventually be available in English, Spanish and Polish. Lastly, Judge Bozzuto reported that a Family Support Magistrate Videotape of Advisement of Rights has been recorded in English. The workgroup hopes to have the Spanish version recorded in June 2010.

Judge Norko reported on two very successful programs that the Self-Represented Workgroup developed, the Greeter program in the New Haven Judicial District and the Advice Days pilot program at the Family Court in Hartford. He said that the Self-Represented Workgroup has worked closely with the Hartford County Bar to create a free Advice Days pilot program at the Family Court in Hartford. The program is staffed by twenty-two volunteer attorneys from the Hartford County Bar for two hours each Wednesday morning. Judge Norko indicated that the program has received overwhelming support from both the volunteer attorneys and self-represented parties.

Judge Norko also described the pilot Courthouse Greeter program which takes place every Tuesday and Wednesday at the New Haven Judicial District. The courthouse greeter is a branch employee who helps the public

find their way at the courthouse. Judge Norko indicated that the courthouse greeter is extremely helpful and has fully embraced the program.

- III. Performance Measures Update on Problem Solving and Uniformity - Attorney D'Alesio briefly told the Committee about the Family Support Magistrate Problem Solving Pilot at the New Haven Courthouse which has operated each Wednesday since January 27, 2010. He indicated that the implementation team continues to develop baseline information for the pilot in a custom database. The database tracks all performance related measures. He told the members that Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) has been gathering satisfaction survey results from court participants. Preliminary results indicate very positive feedback, particularly around the perception of fairness and treatment by the court. Preliminary results for both the performance measures and CCSU satisfaction survey outcomes should be available in June 2010.
- Attorney D'Alesio indicated that a survey of the Connecticut Bar for compliance with the Uniform Civil Trial Management Orders is currently being drafted. The goal is to collect six months or more of data starting June or July 2010.
- IV. District Liaisons - Ms. Nichols informed the Committee that a two page application for District Liaison was drafted by the Strategic Management Unit and approved by Legal Services. The application is now available online. She indicated that all applicants must have their supervisor's approval and a minimum of two years of Branch service to apply, along with two Judicial Branch references. In addition, she said applications are due by May 21, 2010, with interviews sometime in June 2010.
- V. Pillars of Service Excellence – Attorney Nancy Kierstead and Ms. Shawna Woodard gave a presentation on the Pillars of Service Excellence. The four Pillars are fairness, respect, professionalism and integrity. They indicated that the Pillars reflect the four core stated values of the Judicial Branch Strategic Plan, which is the foundation of the program. They explained to the Committee that the program will reinforce the Seven Habits of Covey. The two-day training will focus on the Strategic Plan and the trainers'/ participants' personal objectives as they relate to the "Pillars of Service Excellence". The curriculum will also include additional classes/workshops that will reinforce the goals and values of the Strategic Plan. Participants, will be able to take up to four or five classes a year. They told the Committee that the training will initially be available to the Superior Court Operations Division, however, training will eventually be shared with all Divisions in the Judicial Branch.
- VI. Access to Facilities – Attorney D'Alesio briefly told the members that the Access to Facilities Committee was recently formed as part of the second phase of the Strategic Plan. He indicated that the Committee is charged with making recommendations to address and eliminate barriers that impede entry to and movement around ranch facilities and he explained that the Committee

is focusing on signage and is currently developing a checklist of standards for signage. The committee is expected to meet again in June.

VII. Committee Report – Judge DiPentima told the Committee that the yearly report updating the Chief Justice on the progress of the implementation of the Strategic Plan is due in June. The report will include updates from the initial twenty-eight initiatives and the four new initiatives, as well as the work of the Strategic Plan Assessment Committee. Judge DiPentima indicated that she will distribute a draft outline of the report to Committee members for their review.

VIII. Next Meeting - The next meeting of the Strategic Plan Assessment Committee will be on Thursday, June 10, 2010 at 1:00 p.m. at the Supreme Court Attorney's Conference Room at 231 Capitol Avenue in Hartford, Connecticut. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.