

Draft Minutes of Survey Subcommittee  
From Meeting of May 15, 2007

The meeting began at approximately 2:30 p.m. Attending were the co-chairs, Judge Barbara Bailey Jongbloed and Scott Brede of the Connecticut Law Tribune, and members Joe D'Alesio, of the Judicial Branch's Superior Court Operations Division; Karen Florin of The Day; Paul Giguere of CT-N; Patrick Sanders of the Associated Press; and Judge Carol Wolven.

On behalf of the co-chairs, Judge Jongbloed welcomed those who had volunteered to serve on the committee. She added that the subcommittee has a narrow objective. One of the first questions the committee must determine, she said, is whether it will base its surveys on surveys done in Massachusetts by its Judicial-Media group. Mr. Brede added that he thought there should be two separate surveys, one for judges and one for journalists.

Mr. Sanders asked whether the objective of the group is to find out what problems exist. Judge Jongbloed responded that the surveys are intended to find out about concerns and experiences, and to tap into situations we may not know about. Mr. Sanders added that he would prefer to have more open-ended, neutral questions than those in the Massachusetts survey. Judge Jongbloed asked whether people might be less likely to answer more open-ended questions, and said she thinks the subcommittee needs to balance the types of questions used.

Mr. Sanders asked about the project's deadline for getting responses. Subcommittee members agreed they wanted to move as quickly as possible, but not at the expense of the quality of the survey. Judge Jongbloed asked who the survey should go to and whether it should be anonymous. Ms. Florin answered that she would prefer people to have the option of identifying themselves, and also said she would like to make the survey available to any journalist who would like to respond. The survey could be available through the Judicial Branch's website, she added. Mr. Sanders asked whether the survey should be expanded to include the public; Judge Jongbloed responded that that's a different matter and goes back to the subcommittee's mission.

Mr. Sanders said the Associated Press has a database that has email addresses of top editors in Connecticut and generic accounts that could be used as a resource for sending out the surveys. Committee members also expressed interest in contacting reporters and editors at weeklies to get their input. Mr. Sanders suggested that the subcommittee could work through such groups as the Society of Professional Journalists, Connecticut press clubs and CCFOI for additional contacts.

Ms. Florin asked how the subcommittee could get people to respond. Mr. Sanders answered that the committee would be thrilled to get a 50 percent response; a 25 percent response would be pretty good. Those who respond will be those with the most interest, he said. Judge Jongbloed said she thought that there would be a "pretty significant response" from the judges. She also suggested that it might be a good idea for

subcommittee members to break into smaller groups and work on the questions; journalists could work with journalists and judges with judges.

Subcommittee members expressed concern that sending out the survey before September could decrease the number of responses with summer coming. Mr. D'Alesio said that while sending out the survey in September might be stretching it, it also would mean that the final product would be more effective. He also suggested that the National Center for State Courts could help the subcommittee, particularly if other states besides Massachusetts have conducted similar studies of journalists and judges. He said he would contact the NCSC to see if those surveys have been done before and report back to the committee. Mr. D'Alesio added that he would check to see if the NCSC has information on surveys conducted of the public. Judge Jongbloed suggested an email to the judges also could be used to solicit their input for the survey.

Ms. Florin said that she thought it important the survey be applicable to those reporters who don't cover court regularly and that she would like the questions to take this into account.

Mr. Brede asked whether clerks should be surveyed. Mr. Sanders answered that he would come down on the side of doing it, since they are the ones directly interacting with reporters. Such a survey could be given to any clerk who has contact with the media, Mr. D'Alesio said, and it's something that could be done in the process of training that currently is underway for the clerks. He suggested putting together a sample survey for the clerks and seeing how it looks.

Mr. Brede asked whether editors should be asked to distribute the survey to reporters who cover court. Ms. Florin said she would prefer to go to a larger group of reporters, but that editors also could distribute the survey to reporters who cover court regularly.

The subcommittee agreed that Mr. D'Alesio would see what information he could get from the NCSC. The committee scheduled its next meeting for July 17, 2007, and adjourned at about 3:30 p.m.