

## *Minutes from Survey Subcommittee Meeting of June 11, 2008*

Present: Karen Florin, Judge Barbara Bailey Jongbloed, Paul Giguere, Patrick Sanders, Tom Scheffey, Judge Carol Wolven.

Absent: Joe D'Alesio

*Agenda Item No. I:* Co-chairs Karen Florin and Judge Jongbloed welcomed members of the committee; the meeting started at 2 p.m.

*Agenda Item No. II:* Subcommittee members approved the minutes from their meeting on May 6, 2008.

*Agenda Item No. III:* The subcommittee continued its discussion of recommendations stemming from last year's surveys of judges and journalists, in preparation for the full Judicial-Media Committee meeting on July 14, 2008.

Subcommittee members made the following changes. (Deletions in brackets; additions in bold)

### A. Facilities

1. Study courtroom acoustics and audio systems and make improvements to ensure that everyone in the room can hear the proceedings. [The study should be conducted on a priority basis with priority given to older court facilities.]
2. **Study ways to adapt current sound systems to provide the media with adequate audio feeds, while protecting participants' ability to have off-the-record, confidential conversations.**

### B. Public Service

1. The Court Operations Division should continue its training of courthouse staff. This subcommittee should review the curriculum used for the training on a yearly basis.
2. Develop a public service/customer service incentive for clerks and other front-line employees. Encourage clerks to greet public immediately. Provide backup when lines form in clerk's office. Provide a way for public to praise/complain about the service. Every effort should be made on the media's part to inform the clerk's office beforehand that they are interested in a case.
3. Create a vehicle for feedback and/or suggestions from judges, judicial employees and the media.
4. The possibility of reducing the cost of copies produced at the clerk's office **and/or transcripts from the court reporters/monitors** should be examined.

### C. Outreach & Education

1. Expand the “frequently asked questions” section of web site and Judicial publications for media. Include sealing policies and procedures, information on availability of court exhibits and a section explaining the typical contents of a court file.
2. The Law School for Journalists should continue. **Yearly informational sessions also should be provided by Judicial for members of the media who are interested in learning about how courthouses function generally.**
  - a. External Affairs and court staff could reach out to new court beat reporters to provide basic information and let the reporters know they are available. (moved from category of Judicial/Media Relations)
  - b. **Expand Judicial Branch’s Speaker’s Bureau to include judges willing to speak at media organizations.**
3. Conduct a panel presentation of media members and judges at the Judges’ Institute relating to the media:
  - a. Decision-making concerning editorials;
  - b. Degree of reliability required before publishing investigative articles;
  - c. Decision-making concerning value/need for video coverage;
  - d. Discussion among judges with experience having cameras in the courtroom and members of the media.
  - e. [Problems] **Experiences** regarding cameras in the courtroom.
  - f. Off-the-record discussions.
4. Create opportunities for clerks, judges and other staff to meet with media to learn about news cycles and priorities. Media could provide facility tours and be available to explain news decisions.
5. The *Guide to Court Information* should be updated. [Create a media booklet consisting of] **Ensure that the *Guide to Court Information* contains** a compilation of statutes and Practice Book rules relating to media coverage in the courthouse, including discretionary matters on which judges may differ and rules pertaining to Juvenile Court.
6. **The Branch should consider promulgating** [Promulgate] suggested guidelines for judges as to procedure to follow when:
  - a. contacted by media;
  - b. media coverage inaccurate/unfair.

7. Designate mentors for both judges and media members to consult when issues regarding media in the courthouse arise.

#### D. Judicial/Media Relations

1. Appoint media liaison in each courthouse. (**This request was put on hold for the time being.**)
2. The role of the Fire Brigade should be **re-evaluated**. [expanded to so that it can mobilize to resolve conflict between the judiciary and the media, including instances where a judge is perceived as being unfairly criticized. The group should be equipped for both immediate response and long-term analysis and discussion of ongoing issues.]
3. Ask clerks to consult judge on a file's availability for public/media review when the judge has the file. Encourage the judge to make available a portion of the file, such as the [initial] complaint and latest pleading.
4. Provide ongoing opportunities for ongoing dialogue between judges and journalists. [The Law School for Journalists was an excellent start.]
5. [External Affairs and court staff could reach out to new court beat reporters to provide basic information and let the reporters know they are available.]
6. [Administrative judges and editorial boards could meet informally for off-the-record discussions about court access issues and current events. Beat reporters should be invited to participate in meetings.]
7. Educate and inform judges on [the role of External Affairs] **potential resources, such as External Affairs and/or the Fire Brigade.**

#### E. Judicial Process

1. [Create a committee to study/improve access to juvenile proceedings before a new law is implemented (in 2010?).]
2. Review standards for sealing documents, particularly when a criminal case investigation is "ongoing" for months or years.

*IV. Adjourn:* The subcommittee adjourned at 5 p.m. If needed, it scheduled another meeting for July 9, 2008.

