

**Draft Minutes**  
**Connecticut Judicial Branch**  
**Access to Justice Commission**  
**Wednesday, 18 May 2016**  
**231 Capitol Avenue**  
**Hartford, CT**

**Members present:** Hon. Elliot N. Solomon, Hon. Maria A. Kahn (Co-Chairs); Ms. Dawn LaValle, Atty. Thomas P. Chapman, Ms. Heather Collins, Atty. Steve Eppler-Epstein, Atty. Barbara McGrath, Atty. Susan Garcia. Also: Atty. Joseph Del Ciampo, advisor to the Commission.

**Members absent:** Hon. William S. Bright, Hon. Ingrid Moll, Atty. William H. Clendenen, Jr., Ms. Krista Hess, Chief Public Defender Susan O. Storey, and Atty. Herman Woodard Jr.

**Workgroup members present:** Atty. Chris R. Nelson, Atty. Jeff Dowd.

- I. Welcome:** Judge Solomon called the meeting to order, and he and Judge Kahn welcomed the Commission and workgroup members.
- II. Minutes of the March 30, 2016 Meeting:** The minutes were approved. Atty. McGrath abstained, as she was not present at the meeting.
- III. Decision on status of existing workgroups:** There was a discussion of the status of the existing workgroups.
  - **Libraries & ATJ:** Ms. LaValle and Atty. Dowd: Ms. LaValle noted that libraries across the state are seeing their community programs growing, not only literature-related programs, but social service type programs, including literacy, employment, and other needs-based offerings. The partnership between libraries and the Judicial Branch, as well as stakeholders from the legal community, can only increase access to justice. The second phase of the workgroup will focus on developing programs between libraries, including training on how to help their patrons access legal information and resources, and the Branch and legal community stakeholders. The Workshop will continue, and Judge Solomon said the chairs can decide what its membership should look like depending on the needs of the work they hope to accomplish.
  - **Modest/Moderate Means Programs & ATJ:** Atty. Nelson gave an update on the status of three initiatives, or incubators, that will, when launched, provide affordable legal representation to people of modest and moderate means. There are about 60 such programs across 30 states, Atty. Nelson noted, as lawyers in the private and public sector work with their bar associations and law schools to address the justice gap. Incubators generally feature new attorneys, with some mentoring from experienced attorneys, setting up shop in donated or low-cost property, sharing resources and space, and providing services based on a sliding scale. Unlike legal aid, which requires clients to have poverty-level income, MMMPs serve people who work but cannot afford an attorney. Many but not all of the programs focus on civil legal needs, such as divorce, foreclosure, wills, wages, employment, etc.

According to Atty. Nelson, the first MMMP will launch in Bridgeport, in early 2017, as The Legal Justice Center (LJC). The program is being developed by and housed at the Center for Family Justice, a non-profit which provides services and care for people impacted by domestic violence, sex assault, and child abuse, as well as education and training. The Legal Justice Center was created with a grant from a private family foundation and in collaboration and partnership with the Greater Bridgeport Bar Association, the Connecticut Bar Association, and Quinnipiac University School of Law. It is planned that the LJC will include up to 12 attorneys, each working within the program for two years, practicing within a variety of areas, including criminal, serving low and moderate income people served by the Center for Family Justice. In exchange for providing an agreed-upon amount of pro bono and reduced-fee work, the attorneys will enjoy subsidized office space and resources, and mentoring. The Legal Justice Center will seek applicants for an inaugural pilot of four attorneys, later this summer.

- Attorney Nelson also noted that the Hartford County Bar Association is working the University of Connecticut School of Law to explore the feasibility for an incubator program in Hartford County, but finding affordable space has been a challenge. Additionally, he told the Commission, establishing a similar program in New Haven is in its infancy, and he and Attorney Pat Kaplan are starting to work with bar members to stimulate interest.
  - The Workgroup will continue.
- **Videoconferencing and ATJ:** The workgroup, led by Ms. Hess and IT specialist Scott Rosengrant, successfully launched a volunteer attorney day program utilizing videoconferencing. Pro bono lawyers sitting in the Waterbury JD assist self-represented parties with foreclosure cases in the New Britain JD. Judge Solomon would like to see the workgroup continue to work on making additional use of the Branch's videoconferencing equipment.
  - **Workgroup on Online Pro Bono Legal Assistance:** This program, based on the OnlineTNJustice.org national model, is launching later this year, thanks to a partnership with the ABA and the state's legal aid community. This Workgroup's work has been completed.

**IV. Discussion of potential new ATJ-focused initiatives:** A number of potential projects/initiatives were submitted by the members. However, it was decided to table this agenda item and hold a discussion next month (June 2016), to give everyone a chance to digest the submissions and possibly make suggestions on how to proceed.

**V. Membership:** Judge Kahn and Judge Solomon thanked everyone for their service to the Commission over the last several years, while acknowledging that such meetings and commitments can be difficult to sustain for lengthy periods of time. Judge Solomon asked the members to email him if they would like to remain on the Commission. It was also suggested that new members from affinity bar associations be asked to volunteer to serve on the Commission to help ensure a diverse membership.

**VI. Next Meeting:** Atty. Eppler-Epstein volunteered the use of a conference room with teleconferencing equipment for the next meeting. Ms. Collins will email the members with a date and instructions on how to participate via telephone.