

Minutes
Family Commission
March 12, 2014

The Family Commission met in courtroom B2 at the Hartford Judicial District Courthouse located at 90 Washington Street, Hartford, CT on March 12, 2014.

Those in attendance: Hon. Elizabeth Bozzuto, Chair, Hon. Holly Abery-Wetstone, Hon. John Boland, Hon. John Colella, Hon. Anne Dranginis, Attorney Michael Fasano, Attorney Gaetano Ferro, Attorney Constance Frontis, Johanna Greenfield, Attorney Deborah Grover, David Iaccarino, Hon. Maureen Murphy, Attorney Thomas Parrino, Hon. Barry Pinkus, Hon. Elliott Solomon, Deputy Chief Court Administrator.

Also in attendance was Attorney Nancy Porter from the Judicial Branch's Legal Services Unit.

The meeting was called to order at 2:08 PM by Judge Bozzuto.

I. Review and approval of minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on January 8, 2014 were approved by the members of the Commission who were in attendance.

II. Practice Book rule requests for consideration /codes of conduct

Attorney Porter reported out that the proposal to amend the rules based on the concerns raised by Judge Adelman was approved by the Rules Committee as was the proposal to amend section 25-33. The proposal to amend section 1-25 is still pending.

Judge Bozzuto asked the Commission members to consider whether there should be a code of conduct for those appearing in family court. It was noted that the attorneys are governed by the Rules of Professional conduct, but it is not clear whether others who appear in court have enough of an understanding as to how to conduct themselves outside of what they observe. There are some materials available, such as the video on representing yourself and the Do It Yourself Divorce Guide that provide some guidance. Judge Bozzuto will do some research into what other states have done.

III. Case management for post-judgment matters

The question was raised as to what the best method would be for the court to determine which cases need post-judgment management. The case management agreement form already has a place for post-judgment matters, but it does not seem to be utilized.

The New Britain short calendar pilot program was discussed. The Commission members generally liked the idea of all matters that appear on the short calendar being considered “ready” without a marking.

A couple of main issues were identified. One was when people who are ready to prosecute cannot move forward. The other is when motions accumulate over time, having not been prosecuted, and suddenly they are all marked ready, with a need for substantial hearing time.

A number of suggestions were made, including the possibility of a rule or standing order regarding motions that haven’t been resolved within a certain time period (such as 60 days) must schedule their motions through caseflow if they will need a hearing. It was suggested that there may not be a one-size-fits-all solution based on the differing resources in the different Judicial Districts.

The matter will be referred to a workgroup including Judge Bozzuto, David Iaccarino, Johanna Greenfield, Nancy Porter, and Judges from the Commission (as determined by Judge Bozzuto).

IV. Refinements to the Family Standing Orders

The pretrial standing order was revised in accordance with the suggestions from the Commission members. It may need better placement on the Judicial Branch website. There was some discussion as to whether this could apply to post-judgment matters but that would require further exploration.

V. Case Management Agreement for custody cases

The draft Case Management Agreement form for custody cases was distributed to Commission members, who unanimously approved it.

VI. Such other matters that may come before the Commission

Attorney Michael Fasano was introduced by Judge Bozzuto to the members of the Commission. She also indicated that the Chair of the Family Law Section of the Connecticut Bar Association will also have a space on the Commission, which is currently Attorney Robert Zaslou. Judge Bozzuto also announced that David Iaccarino is retiring effective May 1st and the Commission members expressed their congratulations and appreciation for his efforts, contribution and accomplishments.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for May 14, 2014. The financial affidavit will be placed on the next agenda.

Judge Bozzuto adjourned the meeting at 4:51 PM.