

Minutes  
Family Commission  
September 10, 2014

The Family Commission met in Courtroom B1 at the Hartford Judicial District Courthouse located at 90 Washington Street, Hartford, CT on September 10, 2014.

Those in attendance: Hon. Elizabeth Bozzuto, Chair, Attorney Michael Blanchard (late), Hon. John Boland, Hon. John Colella, Attorney Steven Dembo, Attorney Gaetano Ferro, Attorney Johanna Greenfield, Attorney Allen Palmer, Attorney Thomas Parrino, Hon. Elliott Solomon, Deputy Chief Court Administrator

Also in attendance were Attorney Joseph Del Ciampo and Attorney Nancy Porter from the Judicial Branch's Legal Services Unit and Attorney Damon Goldstein from the Judicial Branch's Court Operations Unit.

The meeting was called to order at 2:15 PM by Judge Bozzuto.

I. Review and approval of minutes

The approval of the minutes of the meeting held on March 12, 2014 was deferred until the next meeting of the Commission.

II. Financial Affidavit

The Commission received the comments provided by Attorney Barbara Stark about the financial affidavit forms.

Judge Bozzuto reconvened the workgroup made up of members of the Commission that had previously studied changes to the financial affidavit form. The comments from Attorney Stark are referred to the workgroup for their further consideration. Judge Bozzuto said she would provide the workgroup with any additional comments from judges. Attorney Palmer stated that comments from attorneys could also be collected by a posting on the Connecticut Bar Association website. The workgroup will meet at a date to be determined and will report to the Commission at the next meeting.

III. Survey Results

The Commission discussed the results of a survey of participating states about whether they utilize a specific set of rules, guidelines, or code of conduct for self-represented parties and whether something similar should be created here in Connecticut.

The discussion touched upon several issues including the distinction between process and substance. A suggestion was made that it would be beneficial to have an educational video about the trial process. There is a great deal of material available to self-represented parties instructing them on procedure prior to trial, but there is nothing specific available regarding the process for a contested hearing.

The point was raised that this issue may also be handled by the Branch's Public Service and Trust Commission. There is a subcommittee that deals with access to the courts by self-represented parties. Judge Bozzuto will reach out to members of the subcommittee for their input.

#### IV. Administrative Divorce

The Commission discussed the creation of a procedure and criteria for administrative or non-litigated divorces. The Commission had previously approved a set of criteria on October 30, 2013.

Members in attendance were in general agreement regarding their support for some form of administrative dissolution.

The Commission revisited the criteria that had been previously approved. The use of certain income guideline thresholds was raised, but no specific amount was agreed upon. The Commission also discussed whether or not this was an issue for the legislature and to what degree the legislature would support such a proposal.

Judge Bozzuto is going to speak to Deborah Fuller, Legislative Affairs Director, and report back to the Commission.

#### V. Mission/purpose of the Family Commission

The Commission discussed the past, present, and future missions of the Family Commission. The Commission was originally created to review and update the practice book rules for family cases. All members present agreed that the Commission has gone beyond its original charge. The members also agreed that it was no longer necessary to meet on a regularly scheduled basis. The Commission will continue to meet from time to time when there are issues brought to its attention by the bench and the bar for discussion. All members agreed that the family bar has always been comfortable bringing important matters to the attention of the bench when needed.

#### VI. Collaborative/mediated divorce

The Commission agreed that a group of lawyers who practice collaborative divorce will put together something in writing on this issue. It will be discussed by the Commission at the next meeting.

VII. Such other matters that may come before the Commission

None.

VIII. Next meeting

The next meeting will be scheduled at a date to be determined.

Judge Bozzuto adjourned the meeting at 3:20 PM.