

DRAFT MINUTES, NOT YET APPROVED
Connecticut Judicial Branch
Law Library Advisory Committee

The Connecticut Judicial Branch Law Library Advisory Committee met on November 6, 2020 via the remote platform – Microsoft Teams.

Present

Hon. Erika M. Tindill, Chair
Hon. James W. Abrams, Vice Chair
Hon. Melanie L. Cradle
Hon. Robyn S. Johnson
Hon. Glen Pierson
Atty. Michael R. Brandt
Atty. William H. Clendenen, Jr.
Atty. Adam J. Cohen
Jessica de Perio Wittman
Ms. Ann DeVeaux
Atty. Eamonn S. Wisneski

Absent

Hon. Kevin C. Doyle

Other Attendees

Deirdre M. McPadden, Director, Judge Support Services
Ms. Ann H. Doherty, Deputy Director, Law Library Services

Judge Tindill chaired and called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

I. Introduction of members

Judge Tindill introduced Judge Pierson, newly appointed committee member, to the Law Library Advisory Committee members.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Judge Tindill to approve the minutes from the November 22, 2019 meeting. The motion was seconded by Judge Abrams and approved unanimously.

III. Resolution

Judge Tindill reviewed the proposed resolution recognizing Hon. Douglas C. Mintz for his years of dedicated service as Chairman of the Law Library Advisory Committee and moved for the approval of the resolution. The motion was seconded by Attorney William Clendenen and approved unanimously.

Judge Tindill reviewed the proposed resolution recognizing Teresa Miguel-Stearns for her years of dedicated service as a member of the Law Library Advisory Committee and moved for the approval of the resolution. The motion was seconded by Attorney William Clendenen and approved unanimously.

IV. Law Library Operations

Ann Doherty reported the following in connection with the Law Library Services Unit:

- **Covid-19 Impact** - On March 16, 2020 Ann submitted a recommendation to Administration that all of the law libraries be closed to the public immediately due to the very real concerns for the safety of frontline staff dealing with the public. The recommendation was accepted and the libraries closed immediately.
- After the shutdown, staff continued to respond to questions and requests submitted to the remote email services, “Ask a Librarian” and “Ask Us a Question”. As the Branch closed courthouses and went to skeleton work staff, the number of questions received by the email services rapidly increased. Staff librarians were tasked with responding with accurate, up-to-date information.
- Other services were also maintained: Law Library Services’ Newslog, new and revised “Law by Subject” pages, collaboration with External Affairs on the publication and maintenance of the web feature FAQ’s – Covid-19 and Court Business, payment of invoices, when possible, and maintenance of the Law Library Services’ web page.
- Librarians returned part time to their respective libraries in August. They began the task of sorting, accessioning, and shelving materials that had been delivered since the March shutdown.
- When the law librarians returned to the courthouse library facilities full time in September, telephone contact with patrons, and eventually “Chat” interactions were reintroduced.
- The law librarians, under the direction of their respective supervisors, drafted plans and diagrams for the installation of plexiglass partitions. The plans were submitted to the Judicial Branch Facilities Unit on October 23, 2020. Judge Johnson question how the plexiglass protections were planned. Ann explained the each library is different in size, configuration, and furnishings so plans took into consideration how to best protect both staff and patrons.
- Due to the increase in Covid reported cases in Judicial Branch facilities, starting November 9, 2020, the librarians will be alternating weeks – at any given time, half of the staff will be working in the library week one; and working remotely week two. All but four librarians have the equipment and connectivity to work from home. Those four librarians will work in their respective libraries each work day. Judge Johnson asked if staff were provided equipment. Ann reported that when equipment was available and needed, it was provided. Ann also reported that library staff working in a courthouse are fairly isolated and have been instructed to take all necessary precautions for their personal safety.

Budget – The budget for Law Library Services for FY21 was cut by about 5%. Since the budget allotments are based on funds expended the prior fiscal year, Law Library Services incurred a cut since all funds allocated for FY20 were not spent due to the limitations incurred while working from home.

Staffing levels – New Haven Law Librarian, Michele Penn, resigned from Judicial Branch service in March. Stamford Law Librarian, Mike Beetham, requested and was transferred to New Haven, where he currently works three days a week. He continues to work in Stamford two days a week. The transfer has created an open position in Stamford and with the transfer of a Bridgeport Law Librarian to Middletown in 2018, there is also a vacant position in Bridgeport. Since the Stamford and Bridgeport Law Libraries are large libraries, efficient administration necessitates that two librarians be assigned to each location. A request to hire for both Stamford and Bridgeport has been submitted.

- **Activities** – Jeff Dowd, Supervising Law Librarian is Co-Chair of the Access to Justice Commission’s Workgroup on Libraries and Access to Justice. The workgroup drafted a public service announcement, in “audio only” format, that will foster awareness of courthouse assistance services available to the public. Completion of the project has been delayed due to the pandemic.

Chris Roy, New Britain Law Librarian, recorded a podcast with Mike Bowler, Statewide Bar Counsel, discussing the resources and services of the Law Library Services Unit. The podcast is posted on the Judicial Branch MCLE web page “Calendar Call”.

Claudia Jalowka, Supervising Law Librarian, collaborated with the Judge Support Services, Legal Research Unit, to present online interactive legal research training sessions for incoming Legal Research Clerks.

Two law librarians drafted and presented TEAMS training programs to law library staff providing instructions about conducting committee meetings using Microsoft Teams.

All staff are assigned to update and revise materials that are posted to the LLS web page. Also, the librarians continue to develop materials, guides, and online resources. It is with great effort on the part of all staff that the LLS online site remains a valuable resource for all undertaking legal research and/or seeking law related information.

All staff are acclimating and adjusting to providing remote reference service to patrons as opposed to assisting “in-library” patrons. It is challenging but staff realize that service models are changing and it is necessary to plan for ways to serve patrons appropriately through remote mechanisms while adhering to the principles of professional law librarianship.

V. New business – No new business was introduced.

VI. Future meetings and adjournment – The date for the next meeting is to be determined.

The meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.