



## PUBLIC SERVICE AND TRUST COMMISSION

### *Committee on Alternatives to Court Appearances*

#### Cost/Benefit Assessment Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes  
February 10, 2009

Those in attendance:

Mr. David Iaccarino, Chair  
Chief Probation Officer Natalie Latulippe  
Mr. Richard Miele  
Mr. O'Donovan Murphy  
Atty. Jennifer Robinson

Mr. Scott Rosengrant  
Hon. Elliot Solomon  
Mr. Carl VonHassel  
Mr. Cortez White

Not Present:

Ms. Linda Cimino  
Mr. Brian Coco

Ms. Pamela Sarno

The Cost/Benefit Assessment Subcommittee on Alternatives to Court Appearances met on February 10, 2009 at 90 Washington Street, Hartford, in courtroom A2 at 10:00 a.m. This meeting was held by videoconference (VC) among Judge Solomon at Rockville Court, Richard Miele at his office in Wethersfield, and the rest of the subcommittee members at 90 Washington Street.

The meeting was called to order by Judge Solomon at 10:02 a.m. The minutes for the January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting were unanimously approved pending discussed revisions.

Judge Solomon provided subcommittee members with a summary of the New Jersey VC trip. Topics he discussed included the arraignment process which was watched from both the courthouse and jail facility. Some other issues of importance discussed were:

- Impact on Bail Decision
- Equipment deficiencies (audio/video)
- Impact of lack of personal contact between defendant and counsel and defendant and court
- The Memo of Agreement for the Public Defenders Office
- Technological perspective as Connecticut has better hardware (Monitors/Audio Equipment etc.)
- Reactions from the Connecticut Members with the VC process

The subcommittee discussed their observations of the present meeting being conducted by VC. Overall the comments on the technology were positive. Some concerns were the audio levels and acoustics from the Rockville unit. The placement and quality of the microphones at the locations caused interference or an inability to hear clearly.

The subcommittee discussed the purposes recommendations. It was determined that family, and juvenile matters have set forth recommendations for the use of VC/teleconference (TC) in certain court events. Recommendations in civil matters were discussed but are careful on how to use the technology and will rely more on TC than VC. Criminal matters will focus more on taking small steps in any proposed use of VC/TC. Mr. Richard Miele discussed possible uses of VC for cases where inmates are suing wardens and for arraignments for inmates whom commit crimes while in prison.

While there may be some discussion from the Purposes subcommittee that certain types of arraignments could be done by VC, the cost of setting up the equipment for these limited arraignments may not justify the cost. A pilot program was also discussed but will be difficult to implement especially when it requires a rules change, which would not take effect until June 2010. Judge Solomon reiterated the need to come up with realistic uses for VC/TC in criminal matters that can be implemented now and at little cost. Three areas he suggested where:

1. CSSD pre-sentence interviews, jail re-interviews and level service inventory interviews.
2. Callbacks (including habeas issues)
3. CVH competency hearings

O'Donovan Murphy discussed prisoner transports by Judicial. Of the 152,193 inmates and defendants that were in courthouse lockups in 2008, 25 percent were not seen by a judge or magistrate. Judge Solomon discussed the need for oversight on inmate transports. Knowing what the defendant or inmate is coming to court for and having the presiding judge of that case or court make the decision on whether or not transporting the individual to court is necessary could eliminate unnecessary transports.

The subcommittee discussed the issues relating to the Department of Corrections (DOC) scheduling multiple VC's in more than one facility at the same time. DOC is committed to the VC program and will add more VC booths as needed. The cost of setting up a booth similar to NJ would be approximately \$1300 which includes a computer with integrated webcam, and software.

The subcommittee discussed medical transports from the courts. In 2008 there were 693 medical trips to local hospitals with a personnel cost of \$207,000. This does not include the cost of the ambulance transport. There are 40 transports a month for sentence reviews by Marshals, which does not include the transport from DOC to the local jail.

The habeas flow diagram was discussed showing both the traditional way of bringing these cases to court and the alternate way of doing the cases by VC. Mr. Richard Miele and O'Donovan Murphy are going to provide input in greater detail on the steps, from their respective agencies, required to bring these cases to court.

Probation indicated that PSI's by VC may be beneficial but there are concerns that the interviewee may be hesitant in providing valuable information because of fear the interview may be recorded. For the Probation Transition Program (PTP) some officers may feel the personal connection may be lost if VC is used. PTP's were conducted by VC in Waterbury with mixed reviews. The officers did prefer the smaller portable VC units as it made for a more personal interaction. Chief Probation Officer Natalie Latulippe indicated the need for stringent guidelines for the use of VC to enable a secure and confidential VC's. This will help to alleviate any fears probation officers may have. The CSSD administrative meeting was discussed along with the handout that broke down the costs of the meeting. The opinion was that VC is good if one person is presenting to a group but if the meeting was more interactive with different people expressing ideas, VC may not be appropriate as there will be people talking over one another.

The meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m. The next meeting of this subcommittee will be on Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 2 p.m. at a location to be determined.