



## PUBLIC SERVICE AND TRUST COMMISSION

### *Committee on Alternatives to Court Appearances*

#### Cost/Benefit Assessment Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes  
December 11, 2008

Those in attendance:

Mr. David Iaccarino, Chair  
Mr. Brian Coco  
Mr. O'Donovan Murphy

Atty. Jennifer Robinson  
Hon. Elliot Solomon

The Cost and Benefit Assessment Subcommittee on Alternatives to Court Appearances met on December 11, 2008 at 90 Washington Street, Hartford, in the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room at 10:00 am.

The meeting was called to order by Judge Solomon at 10:03 am. He led with introductions and discussed the extent of getting video conferencing up and running. It is imperative for all subcommittees to have specific goals and know what each other are discussing to avoid overlap.

The members discussed the staffing on all the subcommittees. The Purposes subcommittee would have the most members because they are the stakeholders to determine how video conferencing will be used. The Technology subcommittee will have the second largest constituency followed by the Statutes and Rules Analysis subcommittee and the Cost and Benefit Assessment subcommittee.

The subcommittee did discuss some confusion with the dollar amounts as it relates to technology costs and that having a member on the subcommittee from the Judicial Purchasing Department would be helpful to provide insight. While the Technology subcommittee will be able to provide costs on the infrastructure from JIS (Judicial Information System) perspective, administrative costs would be more appropriately be dealt by Purchasing. Also discussed was possibly having a representative from DOC (Department of Corrections), Office of the Victim Advocate, and DMHAS (Department of Mental Health and Addition Services). Transporting defendants to and from CVH (Connecticut Valley Hospital) is extremely costly as it is a special direct trip, which strains personnel resources. The subcommittee will strive to collect and provide data to support issues proposed.

The subcommittee discussed the non monetary and monetary costs for implementing a video conferencing program.

*Non-Monetary benefits:*

- Victim comfort
- Public Safety
- Escapes, moving prisoners is the most dangerous time for Marshals
- Staff/inmate incidents (e.g. workmen's compensation claims, sick time). The representative from the Judicial Marshals will report back to the subcommittee on the number of workmen's comp claims from injuries sustained from confrontations with inmates.
- Health concerns, communicable viruses and diseases
- Case flow efficiency: Both within the courthouse and with CSSD. Processing of pre-sentence investigations is delayed when the probation officers cannot get to the facility to interview the probationers.
- Expert testimony
- Hasten release of inmates from jail
- Less strain on inmates themselves/reduce the indignity of court appearance
- Benefits for mental health of defendants
- Reduce the mixing of prisoners, Part A/B
- Availability for court reporters
- Family contact
- Access for physically impaired, wheelchair bound, pregnant women, and vulnerable witnesses
- Better and quicker medical treatment: The subcommittee noted that a representative from UConn Medical should be contacted to explore a video conference between D.O.C. and the hospital for timely health diagnosis for prisoners.

*Non-Monetary costs:*

- No face-to-face interaction with lawyer or family
- Equipment failures
- User acceptability
- Privacy concerns: D.O.C. guards present when video conferencing
- Sharing of documents during proceedings
- Signing of documents

*Monetary Benefits:* The subcommittee discussed examining a case from arrest to disposition to identify all the costs associated with bringing that individual to and from court. Some of the benefits are:

- Reduce overtime costs
- Redeployment of resources: Courtroom marshals spent the greatest amount of time moving prisoners from the lockup to the courtroom. If video conferencing was done in the lockup at the Police Department it would free up resources.
- Reduce travel costs for conference training seminars
- Reduce transportation costs: fuel, maintenance, insurance, accidents
- Reduce the trips of transporting defendants to CVH
- Reduce the numbers of witnesses flown in to testify
- Savings for the Public Defenders

- Reduce the number of meals for prisoners at court lock-ups

*Monetary costs:* The subcommittee discussed the cost expenditures handout, which was divided as follows:

- Courtroom Installation: This cost will vary based on what the location needs in terms of infrastructure and wiring changes.
- JIS Related Expenditures
- Labor and material per courtroom
- Portable Video Conference Units
- Teleconferencing Equipment

Other *Monetary costs* would be:

- Compatibility of the equipment
- Acoustics
- Quality of the equipment: The subcommittee discussed having different levels of quality for different proceedings
- Possible revenue: Having video conferencing equipment and infrastructure could be a revenue generating project as small law firms could lease equipment and services.
- Inmate damage to equipment

The subcommittee discussed looking into other states that utilize video conferencing and examine how they break the costs down. Also, the subcommittee wants to look into any federal funding that is available for the technology.

The subcommittee identified two issues that have surfaced with video conferencing research. First is the willingness of those with the technology to actually use it and second are those individuals that are not overwhelmed by the technology, but disagree on the implementation based on philosophical beliefs.

The subcommittee discussed the estimated time to complete their recommendations. This subcommittee will determine what it does and the associated costs will be based on the Purposes subcommittee's recommendations. The subcommittee agreed to submit their recommendations one month after the Purposes subcommittee report.

The meeting adjourned at 12:25 pm. The next meeting of this subcommittee will be on Friday, January 9,<sup>th</sup> 2009 at 10 am at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, in Conference Room 204.