



## PUBLIC SERVICE AND TRUST COMMISSION

### *Committee on Alternatives to Court Appearances*

#### Technology Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes  
December 10, 2008

Those in attendance:

Mr. Scott Rosengrant, Chair  
Family Support Magistrate John Colella  
Atty. Eric Groody  
Mr. Ronald Macchio

Atty. Mark Ostrowski  
Atty. Norman Roberts II  
Ms. Celia Seifert  
Hon. David Tobin

Not Present:

Hon. Patrick Carroll III

The Technology Subcommittee on Alternatives to Court Appearances met on December 10, 2008 at 99 East River Drive, East Hartford, in the 7<sup>th</sup> Floor JIS Conference Room at 1:00 pm.

The meeting was called to order by Scott Rosengrant at 1:02 pm. He led with introductions and gave a general overview of the Judicial Branch technology and technical terminology. There is the main data center in East Hartford that all of the video conferencing transmits through. There are 25 courthouses and another 10 CSSD and administrative offices that utilize high speed circuits of 5 to 50 Mbps. There are approximately another 50 courts and offices that are on the slower speed bandwidths of 1.5 Mbps. The subcommittee discussed upgrading all of the lower courts to high speed and prioritizing those courts that would benefit the most from the upgrade.

Scott Rosengrant discussed the two primary ways of delivering data services that can support video conferencing. They are Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), and Internet Protocol (IP) which is the ideal connection as it can broadcast full high definition signal. All of the 5 installed video conferencing systems currently use the IP protocol to connect to the Data Center where the conversion to ISDN can be done if the party on the other end requires the older technology connection. He explains the newer technology uses fiber optics while the older data delivery systems use copper wires. As upgrades occur and the new wires are installed the courthouses will still have the older technology as a back-up if the newer system goes down. While this back-up connection is technically capable of carrying a video conference, it is strongly recommended that the branch not rely on this as a viable transport media as it would cause other court functions requiring connectivity to the judicial network to suffer extreme performance degradation. The handout referencing all the courts and offices that utilize the T1 connection will

be reviewed by the subcommittee and ranked based on which area need to be upgraded first. The subcommittee discussed the necessity to be in close contact with the Purposes subcommittee as they will give recommendations of where and to what extent video conferencing will be expanded to.

Video conferencing systems are used in 5 courthouses at a cost of approximately \$16,000 each. There are also portable desktop video conference machines that have a built in camera. The subcommittee discussed the impact on staffing in expanding video conferencing. Possibly designating on site staff member that would be trained on the technology and will be able to troubleshoot the system if problems arise. Currently video conferencing is used from the court to D.O.C. The subcommittee discussed expanding communications to court to court and court to attorney.

The subcommittee discussed the possibility of having different levels of quality for different proceedings to save costs. Also discussed was video conferencing using host sites (e.g. Skype, WebEx). These services provide a lower quality picture with a lower total amount of pixels, and a delay in transmission in both audio and video. Another consideration is that when using video conferencing it is important to have the party on the monitor to be the same size as if they were there in person. There are also serious security issues with these sites as these host services do not guarantee safety and do not have encrypted endpoints. One of the subcommittee's tasks will be to review all of the technology options as the type of solution we are currently using may not be the best or most cost effective solution for the various uses of video conferencing that may emerge as a result of the work of the Alternatives to Court Appearances committee. Currently the Judicial Branch has its Internet connection through the Executive Branch which limits the potential uses for alternate communications. In July of 2009 Judicial will be switching over to their own Internet connection.

The consensus of the subcommittee is that teleconferencing should be expanded with multi-line phones specifically designed for teleconferencing. This would be excellent for status conferences, scheduling issues and any other administrative procedure agreed upon by the parties. The teleconference unit should enable parties to hear clearly even when walking around the room, have the ability to handle multi calls, the ability to mute any or all of the calls, and would be able to identify each caller to the corresponding line in case the line was dropped. Bringing out the standard telephone and putting it on speaker is not a viable option for a professional, reliable and comfortable conference. The subcommittee is in favor of outfitting all courthouses with these systems.

The subcommittee discussed the desirability of courthouse WiFi. They felt this was outside the scope of Alternatives to Court Appearances because in order to use WiFi one would have to be at the court location to access it. In addition, Court Service Centers have a number of computers for public access. CSSD currently utilizes WiFi in three court lock-up locations. They use tablet PC's to get information from defendants for bail recommendations in court. Entering the data straight into the judicial software from a WiFi antenna located in the cell using the tablets eliminates duplicate data entry. This technology is very costly especially with the thick infrastructure of a lock-up. The subcommittee has no opposition to the technology but it is not an alternative to video conferencing.

Magistrate Colella suggested reviewing all the material provided by Judge Solomon at the first full committee meeting, which dealt with how other states have implemented video conferencing, and

report back on any suggestions at the next subcommittee meeting. In addition Ronald Macchio was going to look into the status of the telephone lines in all the courthouses for the expansion of teleconferencing. The subcommittee members were asked to email Scott Rosengrant with their ideas and suggestions for discussion topics.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm. The next meeting of this subcommittee will be on Wednesday, January 14,<sup>th</sup> 2009 at 99 East River Drive, East Hartford, in the 7<sup>th</sup> Floor JIS Conference Room at 1:30 pm.