

Public Service and Trust Commission Jury Committee

Chairs and Co-Chairs Meeting 1/22/2009 via Teleconference

The teleconference convened at 8:30 a.m. on January 22, 2009.

Present: Jury Committee Chair Judge Linda Lager; Attorney Karen Berris; Attorney William Sadek; Attorney Ralph Monaco; Judge Dan Shaban; Judge Barbara Bellis; Judge Carl Schuman; Judge Nicola Rubinow; Dean Brad Saxton; Esther Harris; Karen Noguera Roman; Irene Mikol.

Absent: Judge Frank D'Addabbo, Jury Committee Co-Chair

Judge Lager thanked the chairs and co-chairs of the four subcommittees for their work and asked them to report on their progress since the first meeting of the full Jury Committee that took place on 12/4/2008. Each of the four subcommittees has had at least one meeting.

Attorney Berris, Chair of the Before Court Appearance Subcommittee, along with subcommittee co-chair Attorney Sadek, reported the following:

The first meeting of the subcommittee was held January 8, 2009 and members agreed to work on the following areas:

- In an effort to make documents easier to read and understand, members are reviewing the jury summons, Reminder Notice, and Your Guide to Jury Duty: An Obligation and an Honor handbook.
- Developing a publication for members of the military.
- Researching changes to the summoning process, for example developing a permanent Jury Master File.
- Reducing the number of persons necessary to be summoned by implementing new methods of juror utilization. Attorney Berris and Attorney Sadek met on January 21 to review statistical data from each court location and to assess the results on initial efforts to reduce summonses in Stamford.

The next subcommittee meeting is scheduled for February 6, 2009 via teleconference.

Attorney Ralph Monaco, Chair of the Arrival subcommittee and Co-Chair Judge Dan Shaban reported that their first meeting was held January 14, 2009. Key areas of focus for this committee are:

- Persons who have a clear reason to be excused, such as medical. The possibility of a pre-screening form is under review.
- Whether jury assembly rooms should be wired for laptop use.
- De-mystifying the orientation process

- Develop a script for judges to use during juror orientation.
- Both jury videos were viewed to determine what improvements may be made.

The next Arrival subcommittee meeting is scheduled for 2/4/2009.

Voir Dire Subcommittee Chair Judge Carl Schuman and Co-Chair Judge Barbara Bellis reported on their committee's activities to date. The first meeting was held 1/13/2009.

Initial committee discussion has focused on:

- Judicial supervision during voir dire process; perhaps having judge trial referee oversee the process.
- Developing pre-screening of jurors by using written questionnaires.
- Encouraging the use of box or group voir dire.
- Re-using jurors who are excused during an earlier voir dire panel.
- Protecting the privacy of jurors particularly with regard to the Confidential Juror Questionnaire.
- Improving the comfort of jurors

The next Voir Dire subcommittee meeting is scheduled for March 5, 2009.

Quinnipiac Law School Dean Brad Saxton, Chair of the Selected Jurors subcommittee and Co-Chair Judge Nicola Rubinow reported on their activities thus far. The first meeting took place on January 13, 2009 and focused on defining the subcommittee's areas of interest. Members examined the American Bar Associations' 2005 Report, "Principles for Juries and Jury Trials" and developed a list of key areas to address. These areas focus on providing jurors with the tools they need to be supported throughout the process. Some areas under consideration include:

- Juror note-taking and provision of notebooks
- Jurors asking questions of witnesses during the trial.
- Plain language instructions.
- Interim statements and consistent use of opening and closing remarks
- Juror compensation

The next meeting is scheduled for February 2, 2009.

Next meeting of the full Jury Committee is scheduled for March 26, 2009. The meeting concluded at 9:24 a.m.