

Minutes
Public Service and Trust Commission
Pro Bono Committee
September 20, 2012

The Pro Bono Committee met on Thursday, September 20, 2012 at 3:00pm at the offices of New Haven Legal Assistance in New Haven, CT.

Those in attendance: Attorney Steve Eppler-Epstein (chaired the meeting in Judge Bright's absence), Attorney Norman Janes, Attorney Alice Bruno, Attorney Jan Chiaretto, Attorney Branford Brown, Attorney Jill Seaman Plancher, Attorney Timothy Johnston, Attorney Alfred Casella, Hon. Tim Keeney, Attorney Susan Nofi-Bendici, Attorney LJ Arnold and Attorney Sharon Dornfeld.

Guests included Attorney Jonathan Shapiro, Chair of the YLS of the CBA and Attorney Sylvia Rutkowska, a member of the YLS Executive Committee.

Attorney Daniel Horwitch from Judicial Branch Legal Services was also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm.

Attorney Eppler-Epstein welcomed the new members of the Pro Bono Committee and asked everyone to take a moment to introduce themselves and provide their professional affiliation.

1. The Committee voted to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2012 Pro Bono Committee meeting. The following members abstained: Attorney LJ Arnold, Attorney Branford Brown, Attorney Jill Seaman Plancher, Hon. Tim Keeney, Attorney Susan Nofi-Bendici and Attorney Sharon Dornfeld.

2. Attorney Eppler-Epstein provided the new members of the Committee with some historical perspective about the Committee, its goals and objectives and the work that has been accomplished under Judge Bright's leadership to date.

Attorney Eppler-Epstein led a discussion regarding the upcoming fall pro bono event on November 14, 2012 that will be jointly sponsored by the Judicial Branch, the Connecticut Bar Foundation and the Young Lawyers Section (YLS) of the Connecticut Bar Association. Attorneys Jonathan Shapiro and Sylvia Rutkowska of the YLS provided some additional logistical information regarding the tentative program for the event. While still in its planning stages, the event, which will be held at Yale University School of Law, will include a brief reception and remarks by Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers followed by a screening of the documentary film, *Crime After Crime*, and will formally conclude with the YLS Pro Bono Fair. This fair will offer lawyers the ability to speak with various pro bono agencies and learn more about the numerous ways they can get

involved. Refreshments and hors d'oeuvres will be provided. Space is limited, and registration is on a first come first serve basis.

Attorney Rutkowska further explained that the documentary film *Crime After Crime*, told the story of two young land use lawyers who took a pro bono habeas case that lasted 5 years. The film appropriately ties into the November pro bono event because it not only underscores the critical need for pro bono work, but demonstrates that lawyers can make a difference even in an area of the law that may be unfamiliar to them.

4. Next, a discussion was held regarding the pro bono “mini summits” and the follow up since last year’s Pro Bono Summit by Justice Rogers and Judge Bright. Attorney Nofi-Bendici reported to the Committee on the New Haven County Bar Association’s pro bono summit which was attended by Justice Rogers and Judge Bright. The New Haven summit provided attendees with a tour of the pro bono portal and an in depth review of available pro bono opportunities and training.

In addition, the suggestion was made that to move forward with the mini-summits and local pro bono events; it might be productive if Justice Rogers and/or Judge Bright could attend the CBA’s Council of Bar Presidents meeting the evening of October 24th. The Committee believes that having Justice Rogers and Judge Bright attend the meeting will not only increase attendance at the Bar President’s meeting, but at subsequent local pro bono events, as well.

Additionally, Attorney Eppler-Epstein provided the Committee with an update on the Committee’s efforts to create a promotional pro bono video utilizing Florida’s “One” marketing campaign. The Florida campaign was developed in 2008 in conjunction with the Florida Bar Foundation and with assistance from a paid consultant. The “One” marketing campaign’s slogan of “One Client, One Attorney, One Promise” is built on the premise that if every attorney took just one pro bono case, the positive impact on the number of low income clients who would be afforded legal representation as a result, would be overwhelming. Attorney Eppler-Epstein, on behalf of the Pro Bono Committee is currently in talks with the appropriate personnel in Florida to determine whether Connecticut could legally and reasonably utilize Florida’s pro bono campaign. The link to the Florida video will be distributed to the Pro Bono Committee.

The Committee discussed the follow-up and outreach with the large law firms since last year’s Summit. Attorney Eppler-Epstein reported that Robinson & Cole has undertaken a TRO pro bono project in the Middletown Judicial District where they assist TRO applicants with their paperwork and affidavits and may enter an appearance to represent the applicant if the matter is brought before the court.

In addition, Cummings & Lockwood provides assistance in Probate Court with appointments for conservators. If the Probate Judge determines that there’s a need for a conservator in a case and there is no ability to pay, the firm may take the conservatorship appointment pro bono.

Several other pro bono projects are being undertaken by large firms in Connecticut including, Murtha Cullina, Edwards Wildman, Halloran & Sage, Updike, Kelly & Spellacy and Day Pitney.

5. Attorney Norm Janes reported to the Committee on the pro bono efforts involving retired attorneys. Attorney Janes, Peter Arakas, Diane Whitney, Bill Breets and Howard Klebanoff are researching the feasibility of starting an emeritus pro bono project in Small Claims to help both plaintiffs and defendants navigate their way through the Small Claims process. A discussion was held regarding how self-represented parties would get notice of the program and a suggestion was made to look into the possibility of the Judicial Branch mailing a notice to all named defendants in Small Claims cases.

In addition, the Committee discussed the issue of malpractice insurance for retired attorneys who participate in the Small Claims program. The Committee noted that for the retired attorneys to be covered under the CBA's umbrella policy, they must be members of the CBA. The Committee also noted that there is a similar pro bono project being undertaken by UCONN law school and the Committee agreed that the efforts from both the retired attorneys and from the law school should be coordinated for maximum benefit.

The Committee discussed the timing for the next meeting of the Pro Bono Committee and some potential dates and times. The dates under consideration will be discussed with Judge Bright before scheduling.

6. The meeting was adjourned at 4:40p.m.