

Minutes

Public Service and Trust Commission Committee on Self-represented Parties Subcommittee on Legal Services

May 8, 2009

The Public Service and Trust Commission Committee on Self-represented Parties, Subcommittee on Legal Services met at 20 Franklin Square, New Britain, Connecticut, Courtroom 3G on May 8, 2009.

Those in attendance: Hon. Henry Cohn (Chair), Attorney Janice Chiaretto, and Attorney Timothy Fisher.

Judge Cohn called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

A motion was unanimously passed to accept the meeting minutes of December 23, 2008 and February 4, 2009.

The subcommittee reviewed and discussed their proposals concerning unbundling of legal services and funding of the legal aid network:

The recommendation concerning piloting unbundling of legal services in family law will be expanded to include foreclosure assistance. Attorney Eppler-Epstein previously informed Judge Norko and Judge Bozzuto, co-chairmen of the Self-represented Parties Committee, that the Pro Bono Committee of the Bar has been supporting a foreclosure assistance project engaging pro bono private attorneys to help homeowners. The Pro Bono Committee suggested that the most useful place for attorneys to help self-represented parties on a limited basis is to file an appearance in the foreclosure and negotiate the debt. The attorney would not have to go to court more than once. The Subcommittee on Legal Services agreed that this service would significantly benefit self-represented parties.

A question was raised whether the subcommittee should provide for limited appearances in housing law in general. After a discussion, the subcommittee felt the scope of the project should remain narrow to only include foreclosure assistance because they recognized the various entities already in place that will make the implementation of such a project seamless: The Judicial Branch Foreclosure Mediation Program, The Pro Bono Committee of the Bar's foreclosure assistance project, and HUD Counseling Centers. They recommend that the Branch's Foreclosure Mediation Program take the lead in coordinating and managing the unbundling of foreclosure assistance. The subcommittee's unbundling recommendation will be revised and sent to Judge Norko and Judge Bozzuto for comments.

Attorney Fisher provided a brief update on recent events concerning the financial crisis of Connecticut's legal aid network. Certain strategies to increase funding for the legal aid network are being considered, such as increasing lawyers' assessments and court filing fees. It was noted

that no money has been received from the federal stimulus package. The subcommittee remains extremely concerned about the huge reduction in funding and maintains its recommendation that the Branch do everything it can to support funding for legal aid.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

DRAFT