

Minutes
Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and
Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters
August 26, 2024

The Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters met on August 26, 2024. The meeting was convened by the chair in Courtroom 2 at 95 Washington Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

Those in attendance: Judge Leo Diana (Chair); Judge Jennifer Macierowski; Attorney Renee Cimino (designated by the Chief Public Defender); Attorney Justine Rakich-Kelly; Attorney Bryan Cafferelli; Mr. Stephen B. Carragher, Public Health Services Manager, Practitioner Licensing and Investigations Section, Department of Public Health

Absent: Attorney Edward Bryan; Attorney Nisa Khan; Ms. Liza Andrews, Policy Director, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Also in attendance were Attorney Grace Palo, Assistant Bar Counsel; Attorney Damon Goldstein and Ms. Nicole Collins from the Judicial Branch's Court Operations Unit.

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM by Judge Diana.

I. Review and Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Justine Rakich-Kelly and seconded by Renee Cimino to approve the minutes from the meeting held on June 17, 2024. The motion passed by a 4-0 vote with Judge Macierowski and Bryan Cafferelli abstaining and three members absent.

II. Possible Removal of Individuals from List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC

At 2:04 PM, in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes §1-200(6), Judge Macierowski moved, and Bryan Cafferelli seconded, to enter executive session to discuss complaints for removal of guardians ad litem.

A motion was made by Justine Rakich-Kelly and seconded by Judge Macierowski to conclude the executive session. The motion passed by a 6-0 vote with three members absent. The Committee reconvened in open session at 2:10 PM.

a. Complaint #24-0008

A motion was made by Judge Macierowski and seconded by Bryan Cafferelli to accept the Probable Cause Panel's findings of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the complaint. The motion passed by a 5-0 vote with Renee Cimino abstaining and three members absent. The complaint was dismissed.

b. Complaint #24-0010

A motion was made by Judge Macierowski and seconded by Bryan Cafferelli to accept the Probable Cause Panel's findings of no probable cause and recommendation of dismissing the complaint. The motion passed by a 4-0 vote with Renee Cimino and Justine Rakich-Kelly abstaining and three members absent. The complaint was dismissed.

Andrew Bachman, a member of the public, inquired if he would be able to address the members of the Committee. Judge Diana granted Mr. Bachman permission to address the Committee. Mr. Bachman expressed his concerns that two complaints may have been dismissed in the absence of a quorum at the Committee's meeting on June 17, 2024. Mr. Bachman also stated that he did not believe that the Committee has found probable cause in regard to any complaint filed with the Committee to this date.

III. Changes to the Active List of Persons Qualified to Serve as a GAL/AMC

a. Attorney Joseph Mager III

Attorney Mager was removed from the active list in January 2024 because the committee did not receive his response to its annual request for updated information. Attorney Mager emailed a request to be reinstated on the active list on June 17, 2024. Attorney Mager meets all requirements of Practice Book Section 25-62(b).

After a brief discussion by the participating Committee members, Judge Macierowski moved and Bryan Cafferelli seconded, that Attorney Mager be reinstated to the active list. The Committee approved the reinstatement by a 6-0 vote with three members absent.

IV. GAL Pre-Service Training

Justine Rakich-Kelly distributed among the Committee members the schedule of presenters for the GAL/AMC Pre-Service Training. The training will be held virtually for participants but will be conducted live. The live training will take place on various dates between September 9 and October 7. A member of the Committee inquired if an individual could access the training if they are unable to attend the assigned dates? Justine reported that the sessions will be available virtually on the Office of the Chief Public Defender website.

After being recognized by the Chair, Andrew Bachman addressed the Committee members to make comments regarding the GAL training. Mr. Bachman shared that he believes that there should be more therapists appointed as Guardians Ad Litem. Additionally, he shared that it would be beneficial if there could be other opportunities for mental health professionals to serve as guardians ad litem in addition to more pre-service training topics directed at mental health professionals.

V. Review and Possible Revisions to the Procedures by Which an Individual May be Removed from the List of Those Deemed Eligible for Appointment as a Guardian Ad Litem or Attorney for the Minor Child in Family Matters

A motion was made by Justine Rakich-Kelly and seconded by Renee Cimino to table this agenda item until the next meeting.

VI. Schedule of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters will be held on Monday November 4, 2024 at 2:00 PM.

VII. Such Other Matters as may Properly Come Before the Standing Committee

No other matters were brought before the Committee.

Justine Rakich-Kelly moved, and Bryan Cafferelli seconded, a motion to adjourn the meeting. The Committee approved the motion by a 6-0 vote with three members absent. Judge Diana adjourned the meeting at 2:39 PM.