



CITIZENS ADVISORY
COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS



Reply to:

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NOTICE OF NEXT MEETING

2 pm

Wednesday, March 15, 2006

Connecticut Bar Association
30 Bank St., New Britain, CT
(860-223-4400 for directions)

Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, December 14, 2005
Burroughs Community Center, 2470 Fairfield Ave., Bridgeport

Secretary by default: Sharon L. Levy

Persons present: Charles Coviello, Rich DeParle, Sonja M. Devitt, J. Andre Fournier, Judith-Anne Hayes, Sharon Levy, Carl Lupinacci, Ed O'Garro, George Papallo, David Pels, Barry Piesner, Raphael Podolsky, Wendi Scott, Penny Trick, Joseph Wincze

Agenda and minutes from the 9/21/05 meeting were handed out.

1. Preliminary Matters:

a. The agenda was approved.

b. The minutes of 9-21-05 were approved. Changes: Andre Fournier was added as present and Joe Wincze was omitted as he was not in attendance.

2. Housing court operations reports:

a.. Housing prosecution

1 and 2. Lack of staffing

Judy Hayes stated that her secretary retired 2 ½ years ago. The position was eliminated because of the budget. A request has been made to the Chief State's Attorney to reopen the position. The case turn-around has increased to up to 3-4 months and Judy is solo. She has no typist and this greatly slows the process. Chris Morano has the power

to decide and supports the position request. There are no investigators for lock out cases. Currently, these cases are referred to the police and clerk's office. The staffing needs are as follows:

1. Support for Atty. Hayes in Bridgeport and Norwalk
2. Investigator to be assigned to the housing prosecutors
3. Eastern Connecticut prosecutor to handle 100% housing

A motion was approved to communicate to the State's Atty's office in writing the above needs, with priority for clerical support for the Bridgeport-Norwalk prosecutor. The chairperson will send this letter.

3. Model landlord address ordinance

The chairperson will check with Judy Dicine on the status of the model ordinance and will send a copy to the Council's email list. He will also send a copy of the Hartford ordinance, which is not based on the model.

4. Housing Prosecution Manual - final version

Copies of the final version of the Housing Prosecution Manual, dated December 2005, were handed out. It incorporates the most recent changes recommended by the Advisory Council. The manual is for prosecutors handling housing cases, and especially for those in the G.A. courts. The final draft has been submitted to the Chief State's Attorney and is presently awaiting his sign-off. This manual was 3 years in the making.

5. Police Training Manual

This manual is intended to answer common police questions on such issues as lockouts, no-heat complaints, and property damage. Work has not yet begun. A question-and-answer format was recommended. The matter was referred to the Prosecution Committee, which will now include David Pels, Rafie Podolsky, Richard DeParle, Joe Wincze, Barry Piesner, Penny Trick, and Sonia Devitt were added to the committee. Richard DeParle will convene the committee.

6. Other Prosecution issues

There have been complaints about the failure of the Bridgeport Police Department to deal adequately with lockouts. The police often fail to understand that lockouts are criminal, nor do they understand what relationships are protected by the landlord-tenant laws. The Department has not been receptive to offers of training by the housing prosecutors. Richard DeParle will contact the Bridgeport Police Chief and suggest that he request a training from Judy Dicine. If the Chief does not make this request, then the Council will follow-up with a letter. The Council will revisit the issue at its March meeting.

b. Housing Clerks

1. Bridgeport-Norwalk schedule and judge assignment

As of September 1, 2005, Judge Pinkus moved from the New Haven-Waterbury Housing Court to the Bridgeport-Norwalk Housing Court. Judge Pinkus is hearing cases in Norwalk on Tuesdays and Thursdays (Tues: civil and summary process trials; Thurs. Regular docket). He is hearing cases in Bridgeport on Wednesdays, which is the largest Bridgeport docket. Judge Cocco is hearing the Bridgeport docket on Mondays and Fridays but will be on vacation from January to April.

The question was raised as to what is Judge Pinkus doing on Mon. and Fri. There is currently no backlog in Bpt. The clerks (George and Ed) have no complaints as to the new Judge schedule and have received no complaints from the public. It is not clear what cases Judge Pinkus has been handling on Mondays and Fridays, but they are not housing cases. He will presumably return full-time to housing when Judge Cocco is on vacation. Although the system seems to be working satisfactorily, concern was expressed that it could set a bad precedent, in that housing court judges are supposed to spend 100% of their time on housing, a practice which the Council supports.

2. Telephone book Blue Pages (government listings) - sheet handed out

The Council has recommended since 1983 that the telephone book listings for the housing courts be revised so that it will be easier for litigants to find the number of the appropriate courthouse. The Judicial Department and the State's Attorney's Office have now agreed to group housing court listings together, with a listing for the clerk's office and for the housing prosecutor at each court location that handles housing. Judicial was not willing to include a separate telephone listing for the housing specialists because of cost. Final implementation is still being worked out.

3. On-line case reporting services: Tabled

4. Spanish booklets for Landlords: Tabled

5. Clerk Staffing:

Bridgeport has posted a position for clerical assistant. An in-house transfer is authorized. Hartford staffing issues were tabled.

6. Other Clerk's Office Issues: none

c. Housing Specialists

1. Printers - A letter requesting printers for four priorities -- Hartford, Rockville, New Haven, and New London -- was sent to Judicial in October.

2. Staffing - Hartford has been short one specialist. The matter was tabled.

3. Other issues -- None

3. Other Business

a. John Doe notices (Rocco Guarnieri) -- Tabled

b. 2006 Meeting schedule -- 3rd wed. of March, June, Sept, and Dec. The March meeting will be at the Connecticut Bar Association in Bridgeport. The location of meetings for the remainder of the year was tabled to the March meeting.

c. Council appointments -- No word on new appointments to the Council. Council members all continue to serve until they are replaced. It was suggested that any others interested in being on the Council should simply begin attending Council meetings.

4. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Levy

Meeting dates for 2006
(sites to be determined)

2 pm, Wednesday, June 21, 2006
2 pm, Wednesday, September 20, 2006
2 pm, Wednesday, December 20, 2006