



# CONNECTICUT ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HOUSING MATTERS



Reply to: 363 Main St., Suite 301  
Hartford, CT 06106  
860-616-4472

## **Notice of next regular Advisory Council meeting**

**2:00 pm (note change of time)**

**Wednesday, March 11, 2015**

**Connecticut Bar Association**

**30 Bank St., New Britain, CT**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JANUARY 9, 2015**

Members present: Raphael Podolsky, David Pels, Loo Dahlke, Juan Verdu, Mary Conklin, Kathy Flaherty, Jane Kinney-Knotek, J.L. Pottenger, Jr., Margaret Suib, Richard Tenenbaum, Lynn Taborsak, Houston Putnam Lowry, Stephanie Ma, Friedrich Helisch, Carl Lupinacci, Venool Fountain, Jr.

Others present: Michele Sensale, Leanne Kennedy, Jeffrey Hammer, Judith Dicine, Steve Lesko,

Members absent: John W. Rowland, Richard DeParle

The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Raphael Podolsky, at 1:44 pm at the Office of the Chief State's Attorney, Training Room, 300 Corporate Plaza, Rocky Hill, CT.

### 1. Preliminary matters

- a. Welcome - The chairperson welcomed all newly-appointed members and explained the statutory basis of appointments to CACHM. The membership list was distributed.
- b. Introduction - The members of the CACHM introduced themselves.
- c. Approval of agenda - The agenda was approved unanimously (motion by Houston Putnam Lowry, second by David Pels).
- d. Approval of the minutes - The minutes of the December 10, 2014 meeting were approved unanimously (motion by Houston Putnam Lowry, second by Richard Tenenbaum).

### 2. Presentations on background of the Advisory Council

- a. The chairperson gave a detailed presentation of the history of the CACHM and its focus:
  - 1) addressing the complicated issue of housing and how summary process law should be taken seriously but in a way that people could function in the court without lawyers (development of pro se forms, assistance at the counter, etc.);
  - 2) staff hiring;
  - 3) assignment of judges;
  - 4) making courts physically accessible and convenient for litigants;
  - 5) monitoring how cases are flowing through the system (especially summary process cases);
  - 6) attempting to preserve small claims cases within the housing court;
  - 7)

publications. CACHM is an executive branch advisory board that is "orphaned" because it is not connected to any state agency. The Council has worked cooperatively with the Judicial Branch and the Chief State's Attorney's Office on many issues. The Council has tried to operate by consensus as much as possible.

b. Role of housing court staff

- i. Jeff Hammer explained the role of clerks in housing court, as defined in CGS 47a-68. Unlike clerks in other civil courts, housing court clerks have to provide procedural assistance to pro se litigants. Suzanne Colasanto, the chief clerk for housing matters, is based in New Haven.
- ii. Michele Sensale and Leanne Kennedy explained the roles of housing mediators. Mediation is required in eviction cases. Court canvasses are not required in all courts (Waterbury, New Haven and Hartford/New Britain do not require a court canvass). They also mediate civil cases and lockouts. They currently have a 93% settlement rate. They also are involved in community outreach, such as seminars and collection drives for nonprofits.
- iii. Judith Dicine explained that the housing prosecutors are a specialty unit of the Chief State's Attorney. She explained their hiring process. They have been granted a critical need exception to the state hiring freeze to fill the long-vacant Bridgeport-Norwalk housing prosecutor position – housing has been selected as a necessary fill. Atty. Dicine is included in interviews. The Chief State's Attorney and the Criminal Justice Commission, which does the actual hiring of prosecutors, have accepted the Advisory Council's recommended standards for choosing housing prosecutors. Both experience in housing and ability to speak Spanish were included in the most recent job posting. Atty. Dicine is involved in both training and as an emergency contact for local fire/building/health/zoning officials and for other prosecutors if they have to deal with housing issues. She has spoken at trainings for the International Code Council and National Fire Safety board. She is also involved in the effort to address hoarding issues, including proposed S.B. 18, which would create a task force on hoarding.

3. Establishment of working committees – The chairperson outlined his proposal to create four committees: Tenant Screening (impact of public access to eviction and other court records for screening purposes, including issues arising from the difficulty in matching names to tenants and in distinguishing between different types of case dispositions; Prosecution and Anti-Blight; Small Claims (tabling the update of the small claims manual for now); and Case Processing/default rate. Membership on each committee should include both landlord and tenant perspectives and, if possible, should include housing court or other Judicial Branch staff. The Initial appointments to these committees are as follows:

- a. Tenant screening: Chair: Houston Putnam Lowry; members: Loo Dahlke, Juan Verdu, Lynn Taborsak, Carl Lupinacci;
- b. Prosecution and Anti-Blight: Chair, Friedrich Helisch; members: Carl Lupinacci, Jane Kinney-Knotek, Vernoal Fountain, Jr., Judith Dicine;

- c. Small claims: Chair, Kathy Flaherty; members: J.L. Pottenger, Jr., Vernoal Fountain, Jr., Loo Dahlke;
- d. Case processing: Chair, David Pels; members, Mary Conklin, J.L. Pottenger, Jr., Lynn Taborsak, Stephanie Ma.
- e. Information booklet on members – tabled
- f. Other working committees – Legislative will be co-chaired by Lynn Taborsak and Houston Putnam Lowry. The committee will be a resource for Council members interested in legislative housing proposals during the 2015 state legislative session.

The chairperson will distribute contact information, and members not present at the meeting can volunteer to be on a committee. Members can serve on more than one committee.

4. Organizational structure –

- a. The chairperson described the history of CACHM's organizational structure. All appointees to the CACHM are serving with terms that expire June 30, 2018. For much of its history, the Council had six officers -- a chair, a secretary, and a chair for each of the four geographic divisions of the Advisory Council (at the time the Council had 36 members). The area chairs were eventually eliminated, leaving only the two officers. The Council decided to retain the two-officer structure. It unanimously elected Raphael Podolsky to remain as chairperson (motion made by Carl Lupinacci and seconded by Lynn Taborsak) and Kathy Flaherty to remain as secretary (motion by Houston Putnam Lowry, seconded by Vernoal Fountain, Jr.) for a term ending June 30, 2018. The chairperson noted that the statute provides that "any member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings or who fails to attend fifty per cent of all meetings held during any calendar year shall be deemed to have resigned from office." It is the chair's intention to enforce the statute in the case of excessive absences.
- b. Meeting dates and location – Meetings will continue to be held quarterly on the second Wednesday of the months of March, June, September, and December. The starting time of meetings was changed from 1:30 pm to 2:00 pm. Meetings have been alternating between the CBA office in New Britain and the Burroughs Community Center in Bridgeport. J.L. Pottenger, Jr. will inquire into the availability of space at the Yale and Quinnipiac Law Schools. Carl Lupinacci will look into alternative sites in the Bridgeport area. The next meeting will be on at 2:00 pm on March 11, 2015 at the Connecticut Bar Association office, 30 Bank Street, New Britain, CT.

5. Other business – None

- 6. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 3:51 pm (motion by Houston Putnam Lowry, seconded by Loo Dahlke).

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Flaherty, Secretary