

VERMONT SUPREME COURT
SPECIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON REMOTE HEARINGS

Meeting Minutes – December 10, 2021

Committee Chair Scott Griffith called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m. via WebEx. Members present included Justice William Cohen, Laura LaRosa, Margaret Villeneuve, Julie Bronson, Doug Rowe, Cedric Baele, Ashley Beach, James Dumont, David Koeninger, Marshall Pahl, Amelia Darrow, Judge Helen Toor, Judge Timothy Tomasi, Judge Frederick Glover, Magistrate Alicia Humbert, and Roger Garrity.

Court Administrator's Office staff members Andy Campbell, Marcia Schels, and Jessica Van Buren were also present. Scott introduced Marcia Schels, new Chief Technology Information Officer, and Jessica Van Buren, new Access and Resource Center Manager.

I. Welcome and Approval of Minutes of August 26 Meeting

Scott Griffith called for a motion to accept the minutes of the August 26 meeting. Judge Tomasi moved to accept the minutes and Judge Toor seconded. A vote was taken, and the minutes were approved without objection.

II. Updates in Select Judiciary Operations

Andy Campbell provided an overview and update on the work of the Remote Hearing Technology Unit, which he is now managing. The unit is comprised of Operations Assistants (OA) and Remote Service Delivery Analysts (RSDA). He indicated that the OAs are responsible for scheduling, hosting, monitoring, and troubleshooting remote hearings and that the RSDAs will focus on optimizing remote hearing practice and researching opportunities for how the Judiciary can improve and sustain its remote hearing practices. He noted that he is in the process of recruiting for both positions but that currently there are 12 OAs and three RSDAs, all of whom are former OAs. Two more OAs will start later this month. Brief discussion followed, which included reference to a product in development by Cisco (the parent company of Webex) called "Connected Justice," which would provide for, among other things, an improved breakout room experience.

Marcia Schels, the Judiciary's new Chief Technology and Innovation Officer, reported the Judiciary's "Courthouse Cleanup" project, which involves the installation of touch pads that will improve audio and video transmissions in order to enable the greater use of hybrid hearings and to generally improve the remote hearing experience for all participants. She indicated further that the goal is to have the project completed by the end of December.

Scott then gave an update on the Judiciary's Access and Resource Center (ARC). He noted that ARC is a new Judiciary initiative and that it will be a service center for those representing themselves; for those with limited English proficiency; for those in need of information about their case, about the judicial process, or about accessing Judiciary forms and services; and for those who are in need of referral to services, including legal services, language access services, and possibly other advocacy or social services. The ARC will be physically located on the first floor of the

Costello Courthouse in Burlington, though Scott indicated that the plan is to develop a range of services to be delivered through the ARC to people around the state using a variety of remote technology tools and strategies. He noted that Ms. Van Buren had been having meetings with a number of people in the Judiciary and in the access to justice community. Ms. Van Buren indicated she is interested in learning about the challenges that self-represented parties have with remote hearings in Vermont's courts.

III. Policy Subcommittee Update

Scott referred members to the Policy Subcommittee Update that has been distributed with the materials. He noted that the Policy Subcommittee met on September 30 and that he met with the chairs of the Oversight Committees on policy issues on October 13. He also reported that Laura LaRosa has agreed to serve as chair of Policy Subcommittee.

IV. Operations Subcommittee Update

Judge Toor introduced the Operations Subcommittee's recommendations. Discussion followed on the various recommendations, after which Advisory Committee members decided to advance items 1, 2, 13, 14, and 15. These recommendations deal with docketing; providing access on the Judiciary website to hearing information in non-confidential cases; and surveying staff, attorneys, self-represented parties, limited-English and hard of hearing parties and others about their experience with remote hearings.

V. Next Steps and Adjourn

Judge Toor will send a memo to Scott which includes the Operations Subcommittee the committee has decided to advance, revised to reflect input received during the meeting. Scott will send them to Pat Gabel and Judge Zonay, as per the Advisory Committee's charge. He will report back to the Committee as to next steps.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.

Submitted By:
Scott Griffith
Committee Chair