

Date: October 6th, 2009

Vermont Commission on Judicial Operation

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Present:

Commission Members: Eileen Blackwood, Esq., Joan Gamble, Hon. Brian Grearson, Hon. Denise Johnson, Hon. Kathleen Manley, Deborah Markowitz, Esq., Richard Marron, Linda McIntire, Stephan Morse, Hon. Paul Reiber, Charles Smith, Senator Jeanette White

Others: Hon. Amy Davenport, Hon. John Dooley, Patricia Gabel, Esq., Robert Greemore, Hon. Marilyn Skoglund

Also, members of the public attended.

Opening Remarks:

Chief Justice Reiber spoke briefly about the Vermont Bar Association's Annual Meeting in September where a town meeting type forum was held to discuss what is happening in the Vermont Judiciary. He reminded Commission members to periodically check the website because the notes from this meeting and other new information are being added as we receive it from the public.

Approval of Minutes of Sept. 11th:

A motion was made to accept the minutes. This motion was seconded. It was opened for discussion. There was no discussion. The vote was to accept the minutes.

Weighted Caseload Report:

The National Center for State Courts submitted an analysis and recommendations based on its earlier Weighted Caseload Report. Both of these documents are posted on the Commission webpage. Judge Davenport made a presentation to the Commission about the most recent report. Extensive discussion followed.

General Discussion

The Commission then had a discussion that included comments about the frequently asked questions, the change management process, and some of the specific issues that were covered in the working group reports and some of the public comment and Commission correspondence.

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The County budget process was discussed, including how Assistant Judges are currently paid. Another issue offered for discussion was the Essex and Grand Isle courthouses.

Next, discussion turned to the timeframe for writing the report, making the report available for comment, and the next meeting. It was decided that 5 to 7 days prior to the next meeting, the draft report would be sent to Commission members for comments. The members would have 2 -3 days time for comments. Then the draft version that had included any changes agreed upon would be posted to the website so the public would have access prior to the next Commission meeting. It was suggested that the next Commission meeting be held in Room 11 of the Statehouse again. The meeting structure would be take public comment and then vote on report. Talk turned to how would the vote on the report work – whole report voted on or by section. It was agreed that members needed time to comment on draft report before it is posted for the public and that the whole report would be voted on.

It was suggested that the Commission also needs to discuss a strategy for what its role will be following the submission of the Report. The Commission agreed that it continued to have a public information role following the issuance of the Report about the need for change. These discussions would be informal. It was agreed that the next meeting should be scheduled at a venue appropriate to encourage public comment, such as in Room 11 at the Statehouse.