



CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS



Reply to:

Meeting Minutes of March 14, 2001

In attendance: Richard DeParle, Jeff Hammer, Ivan Hirsch, David Pels, Joe Wincze, Raphael Podolsky, Sandra Desrosiers, Suzanne Colasanto, Courtney Anderson, Michael J. Flynn, Kristen Rinehart-Totten, Steve Pereira, Judy Rothschild, M. Czazkes

1. Preliminary Matters:

- a. The meeting was called to order at 2:10 p.m.
- b. The meeting agenda was approved.
- c. The minutes of the December 13, 2000, meeting were approved.

2. Housing Court Operations Report

a. *Housing Prosecutor (Judy Rothschild)*

- i. Prosecution Manual – Judy Rothschild has met with Chris Morano to map out an outline of the prosecuting attorneys' manual for Housing Court matters for consistency and training. She is meeting with Mr. Morano to review the draft on March 22nd. The Advisory Council repeated its request that it have the opportunity to offer input on the manual before approval becomes final. Judy reports that Mr. Morano is aware of the Council's request and that she will reiterate it to him at their March 22nd meeting but that the decision on input is up to him.
- ii. Police Academy training curriculum – Training of police is linked with the manual. Fire Marshal's abatement process is being revisited. Code officials re also being retrained.
- iii. Eastern Connecticut prosecutor's time allocation – Keith Carrier is no longer doing motor vehicle cases in New London. His time is now freed up for housing matters.
- iv. Case tracking in GA courts – this discussion was tabled for a later date.
- v. Administrative search warrants -- Current forms are not recognizable as court documents. They look like hand typed forms. Judy is developing something more appropriate.

f. *Housing Clerks: (Suzanne Colasanto)*

- i. **Bridgeport court's relocation** – Ivan Hirsch of the Council's Bridgeport-Norwalk subcommittee reports the courtroom into which the housing court was relocated, which is on the first floor of Golden Hill Street, is too small. The housing specialists' space has no windows and no air circulation. Judge Pellegrino, the Chief Court Administrator, has taken an active and personal interest. Ivan and a small group of interested parties toured the old Juvenile Court space with Judge Cocco. That space however, has already been earmarked for other purposes. The Judicial

Department has decided that space at 1061 Main Street will be made available for Housing Court use. Housing Court services will be spread on the first and fourth floors. The conversion of the space will take approximately six months. Debbie Leveque, the Court Planner, has the blueprints. The proposed space is an improvement on the current location and the Committee will continue to monitor the progress.

- ii. **Consolidation of Norwich/New London cases** – S. Colasanto reports that small claims cases have been consolidated in New London and motor vehicle cases have been consolidated in Norwich. However, plans to consolidate the Norwich and New London Housing Court cases into a single location will not go forward.
- iii. **Norwalk Clerk** – S. Colasanto reports George Pappallo has been assigned to the position.
- iv. **Other Staffing issues** – J. Hammer reports Hartford is fully staffed. Norwalk/Bridgeport has posted a position for Assistant Clerk that is now closed. Posting for Office Clerk in Norwalk is still open. A hiring and equipment freeze is still on. Waterbury lost a part-time position. The position was eliminated.
- v. **New Britain computerization**– Equipment is in, awaiting an order for parts. Installation is expected to be complete in April. Every office staff, courtroom, and judge will have a computer. Documents will be generated from the courtroom. Once all Housing Courts are computerized, on-line Internet services can be discussed.
- vi. **Activity honoring Vic Feigenbaum** – A luncheon was held, at which Vic was given a plaque in recognition of his years of service to the Hartford Housing Court.
- vii. **Pamphlet update –status of Spanish-language pamphlets -- S.** Colasanto reports that Joe Delcampo sent the pamphlet back to the Chief Court Interpreter to review. Also Rights and Responsibilities of Tenants guides have gone back to external affairs for publishing. Currently Rights and Responsibilities of Landlords and Tenants in Connecticut is available in English and Spanish. Tenant's guides are back-ordered in English and Spanish. The Council will speak to Debbie Fuller of External Affairs.
- viii. **Entry of defaults for failure to appear – one-day rule.** The statute used to require entry of the default “forthwith” if the defendant failed to appear by the second day after the return day. Now it requires entry on the next “court day.” The clerk’s office interprets this to mean the next calendar day that the courthouse is open for business.
- ix. **Hartford Housing Court issues** – J. Hammer
 - A. Parking Passes for Eviction Prevention Program personnel from DSS and CRT. – Contact security directly. 4-code system will be operating by coming Monday. PIN’s will be assigned.
 - B. Adequacy of negotiation space for EPP personal – Hartford space too small, courtroom C could be made available. A motion was made by Richard that DSS EPP staff members working at the Hartford Housing Court should be provided by DSS with a computer able to access DSS

files. Ivan seconded and the motion was approved. David Pels will draft a letter to the Department of Social Services.

- C. Hartford backlog -- possible full-time Judge for Hartford and implications for New Britain -- After a great deal of discussion, the Council recommends that an extra judge be made available to handle housing matters in Hartford during the 1.5 days per week that the Hartford judge is in New Britain. If, instead, the Judicial Department assigns one judge five days per week in Hartford, then a single judge should be assigned to hear all housing cases in New Britain, rather than assigning whatever judge happens to be free on a particular day. Council members expressed concern that New Britain's Housing Court must have a regular judge for the docket so that its status as a housing court is not jeopardized.
- D. Other Hartford Matters -- none raised

c. Housing Specialists -- (C. Teixeira)

Computer moved from New Britain to Hartford. There is one computer for 3 people in Hartford. All three Housing Specialists have e-mail working on separate log-ins.

All positions are currently filled.

- 3 Other Business -- None raised
- 4. Regional Caucuses (Particularly Hartford) No discussion

Meeting adjourned at 3:40p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Sandra Desrosiers
Secretary