



# CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS



Reply to:

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## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

**2:00 p.m.**

**Wednesday, September 18, 2002**

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

### **Meeting Minutes of June 13, 2002**

**In attendance:** Richard DeParle, Jeff Hammer, Ivan Hirsch, Joe Wincze, Raphael Podolsky, Sandra Desrosiers, Suzanne Colasanto, Lynn Farley, Michael J. Flynn, Kristen Rinehart-Totten, Steve Pereira, Richard Tenenbaum, Sonja Devitt, J. Andre Fournier, Roberta Oris Palmer, Cynthia Teixeira, Houston Putnam Lowry

- 1. Preliminary matters** The meeting was called to order at 2:08 p.m.
  - a. Approval of agenda:* The agenda was approved.
  - b. Approval of minutes:* The minutes of the March 13, 2002 meeting were approved.
  
- 2. Housing Court Operations Report**
  - a. Housing Prosecutor (Judy Rothschild)*
    - i. Prosecution Manual updates:* Manual is completed. The recommendations and opinions of our committee were considered and many were adopted. The main remaining issue is whether housing prosecutors have jurisdiction over code violations in commercial buildings. The Council believes that the Housing Court Act places commercial code violations within housing court jurisdiction, as are commercial evictions, and our comments recommended that both residential and commercial code violations go to the housing courts. A new prosecutor in Eastern CT – Bret Salafia has been hired. He has some background in litigation and is looking forward to training police, state and municipal officials.  
Prosecution – A Waterbury landlord convicted of fire code violations received 6 months incarceration. Landlord owned 15 properties and

always had violations outstanding and uncorrected on at least 6 at any time. He had pleaded guilty to earlier violations and agreed to commit no more code violations as a condition of probation, but he failed to comply. The court ordered him to divest himself of all his properties, in addition to the jail sentence.

Code-official state training -- Changes include a statewide form for administrative search warrants that should be available next year.

Prosecutor training for Geographical Area courts where there is no housing prosecutor -- Planned for the fall.

Training for State Troopers and police -- To request training, send written request to Judy Rothschild, or in the case of Hartford, to Jessie Bennett, who is the housing prosecutor for Hartford-New Britain.

*b. Housing Clerks:*

- i. Staffing issues (Suzanne Colasanto) -- No staffing issues. Ed O'Garro is now the Assistant Clerk in Norwalk.
- ii. Web Site Update -- New Britain cases are now on-line. WEB system is user friendly. Monday June 24, 2002, New Haven will go on-line, but the whole docket will not be computerized for a couple of months. It is likely that Waterbury will be next but not until this fall at the earliest. The Judicial Department's web site address is [www.jud.state.ct.us](http://www.jud.state.ct.us)
- iii. Pamphlet update - Tenant's Rights and Responsibilities has been translated into Spanish.
- iv. Clerk evaluation -- Tabled.
- v. Issues related to particular court locations -- no discussion.
- vi. Other Developments -- no discussion.

*c. Housing Specialists*

- i. Staff - Sean Deffely was hired as the new housing specialist in New Haven. Sean is a former Temporary Assistant Clerk. He is not Spanish-English bi-lingual. A new vacancy -- Tais Ericson has left as of May 30<sup>th</sup>. She is now a case flow management specialist. There is a hiring freeze and Tais' position in Hartford/New Britain will have to be covered by specialists from other courts. A vacancy is also expected in Bridgeport-Norwalk when Maggie Coffey-Semexey leaves for maternity leave. Maggie Coffey replaced Maureen Marquis as a Housing Specialist in the Bridgeport Housing Court. Staff will be moved to cover for the absences.
- ii. Other developments -- Still looking for computers for the rest of the staff.

- 3. Judicial assignments for September:** The Council submitted recommendations for all three housing court jurisdictions. The judge is expected to change in Hartford. No change is expected in New Haven. Judge Cocco has taken Senior status, which could result in his working less than full time. The Council's longstanding position is that every housing court judge should handle only housing cases and should not split time on other matters. It is assumed that, if Judge Cocco remains as housing court judge, he will cover both the Bridgeport and the Norwalk/Stamford locations. The Council

reaffirmed its opposition to any division of the Fairfield County assignment, since that would leave Stamford/Norwalk with a judge spending only part of his or her time on housing.

4. **Biennial report** - Council has a report due for January, 2003. R. Podolsky will edit and update the 2001 report as appropriate and send out as draft to the full Council for review at September meeting. Final approval will be at December meeting and submission in January.
  
5. **Landlord-tenant legislation in 2002 General Assembly:** .  
R. Podolsky presented material regarding public acts approved during the 2002 legislative session. There were no substantial changes to any landlord/tenant laws. There were, however, small changes in the Security Deposit Guarantee Program (P.A. 02-79 ), the procedures for obtaining building and fire code waivers (P.A. 02-72), and the definitions of transient occupancy in hotels and motels (P.A. 02-30). There were also substantial cuts in the state-funded Rental Assistance Program.
  
6. **Other business** – Richard Tenenbaum raised concern that the Judicial Department may not be complying with new federal anti-discrimination guidelines which require interpretation services for litigants with limited English-speaking ability. The guidelines apply to court systems, such as Connecticut's, which receive federal financial assistance. S. Colasanto will send a copy of the federal regulation to the Chief Court Administrator.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sandra Desrosiers  
Secretary