



CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR HOUSING MATTERS



Reply to: 44 Capitol Ave., Suite 301
Hartford, CT. 06106
(860) 278-5688 x203
Fax (860) 278-2957

MINUTES OF MEETING OF MARCH 13, 2013

Persons present: Kathy Flaherty, Richard Tenenbaum, John Rowland, Raphael Podolsky, David Pels, Houston Putnam Lowry, and Penny Trick

1) PRELIMINARY MATTERS

- a. Call to order: The meeting was called to order by the chairperson, Raphael Podolsky, at 1:47 pm at the Connecticut Bar Association, 30 Bank Street, New Britain, Connecticut.
- b. Approval of agenda: The agenda was approved without objection.
- c. Approval of minutes: The minutes of the December 12, 2012 meeting were approved on a motion made by Houston Putnam Lowry and seconded by Richard Tenenbaum.

2) BRIDGEPORT/NORWALK HOUSING COURT ISSUES

- a. A new mediator, Alexandra Buenaventura, has been hired by Judicial for the Bridgeport-Norwalk Housing Court. This is consistent with the Advisory Council's recommendation, since that court has been down one mediator because of a retirement.
- b. Judge Hauser has not been replaced. There has been a series of rotating judges in the Bridgeport court who apparently come into the housing court when they can get away from their regular assignment. The Norwalk Court has been using two JTRs with previous experience in housing. It was reported that the situation in Bridgeport is having an adverse impact on the process. The judges commonly do not come into the courtroom until after 11 am to hear stipulated agreements; they usually have little knowledge of housing law; and contested matters, including trials, tend to be postponed. Examples were offered of a judge who would not set a trial date, a case in which the parties had to wait more than two hours before a settlement could be presented to a judge, and a lapse of time case in which the judge granted an unusually short stay. The chairperson was directed to communicate to Judge Quinn the Council's request that, in light of the approval of new judicial appointments by the General Assembly, the

Bridgeport-Norwalk Housing Court assignment should be filled promptly. Richard Tenenbaum will contact the clerk to obtain detailed information on how judges in Bridgeport are being assigned to the housing court.

3) **FOLLOW UP TO BIENNIAL REPORT** – none. None is needed.

4) **COURT OPERATIONS**

- a. Prosecution – The prosecution unit will be down one prosecutor in Hartford/NB since Robyn Johnson is now a judge. A bill on landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities concerning bedbug infestations (S.B. 952) is pending in the Housing Committee.
- b. Clerks – The chairperson was directed to contact the housing clerks and ask that at least one clerk try to be present at Advisory Council meetings.
- c. Housing mediators – A new mediator has been hired in Bridgeport (see 2, above).

5) **ADMINISTRATIVE SEARCH WARRANTS** – tabled. It is not clear whether a bill on this subject will be introduced during this legislative session.

6) **ADVISORY COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS** – The chairperson has been contacted by the Governor’s Office, which appears to be interested in making appointments. Interested persons should already have sent letters to the Governor’s office. Those present had a discussion about the size and structure of the Advisory Council. While no recommendations were formulated, there was a sense that the Council is too big and that the best size would be at most 24 members. Opinion was divided as to whether the present geographic distribution for appointments should be continued.

7) **OTHER BUSINESS**

- a. Submetering – There are a couple of bills that would authorize electric submetering.
- b. E-filing in housing court. The Judicial Branch goal is to use e-filing in all courts. There was discussion as to how to incorporate the housing court system with the civil system and, in particular, to be sure that any combined system not reduce the capacity of the existing housing court system. At present, the Meriden and Rockville civil courts are the only ones that put their summary process cases online as part of the civil case online system. Houston Putnam Lowry agreed to review the Meriden online system and prepare a chart comparing the information available for housing cases on the civil system in Meriden with the

information available in the housing session system, including what sort of searches are available in each system.

8) **ADJOURNMENT** –

Meeting adjourned at 2:39 pm (motion made by Kathleen Flaherty, seconded by Houston Putnam Lowry)

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Flaherty, temporary secretary