

**Justice Action Group
JAG Executive Committee**

September 21, 2020

2:00 PM

via Zoom

MINUTES

Present via Zoom: ACJ Mead, J. Rich, Bill Harwood, Robyn Merrill, Liz Stout, Michelle Draeger, Charles Dingman, Jamie Kilbreth, and Frank Bishop (standing in for MSBA President Thaddeus Day).

Justice Mead welcomed Michelle Draeger, Liz Stout, and Frank Bishop and gave a brief history of JAG and its mission. He recommended Diana Scully's excellent history of the Justice Action Group which appeared in the Maine Bar Journal a short time ago.

I. Approval of Minutes from the February 13, 2020 Executive Committee Meeting. No additions/corrections noted. Minutes approved.

II. Report from the Chair – J. Mead

- a. Justice Mead briefly noted the challenges and difficulties that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented to all members of the group and looked forward to a time when we could meet in person again.
- b. Inventory updates: Justice Mead indicated that the inventory list has languished and needs to be updated. He asked Frank Bishop about Lawyers in Libraries program and whether it would continue to be administered by the New Lawyers Section of the MSBA. Frank indicated that he believed that it would. Justice Mead expressed his gratitude and appreciation for whatever efforts the MSBA would be undertaking to continue the program.
- c. Update on reporting pro bono hours with annual attorney registration: Justice Mead reported that the last annual attorney registration by the Board of Overseers of the Bar included a section where lawyers could report pro bono hours and apply for Katahdin Counsel status. The court and the Board are currently attempting to distill the names and numbers from the database. Katahdin Counsel numbers had been dwindling in recent years and the Pro Bono Committee will be looking into measures to reinvigorate it.
- d. The group did not review the request that pro bono work in criminal matters should be considered for Katahdin Counsel status. The question will be referred for a preliminary discussion at the Pro Bono Committee meetings.
- e. Justice Mead reported that the courts' new Odyssey case management system and e-filing project will be rolled out incrementally in Bangor starting in October. Justice Mead encouraged anyone who will be practicing in Bangor in the limited case types, the Business and Consumer Docket or the Motor Vehicle Violations Bureau to be sure to read the new Rules for Electronic Court Systems (RECS). After gaining experience with the Bangor

site, the CMS and e-filing system will be rolled out to other court locations over a period of approximately 18 months.

- f. Future projects for JAG: Justice Mead talked about the recent funding initiative. It was successful, but the language of the statute proved problematic and will need to be corrected at the next session of the Legislature. We are also looking for means to expand JAG's mission and funding stream. Jennifer Lechner, who leads the highly successful North Carolina ATJ Commission spoke to us recently. The ongoing conversation is on hold until the pandemic resolves.
- g. ATJ Day 2021 (March 31st or June 10th): These two dates have been reserved for now until we know when the Legislature may be back. Charlie thinks it will be January. He's not expecting an emergency session to be called.
- h. Review Board and Exec. Committee rosters will be updated.

III. Vice-Chair's Report & Pro Bono Committee Report – Judge Rich: Pro bono has not met in person since January. They had a brief meeting via Zoom on June 3. They had another meeting set for September, but Judge Rich wanted to wait until we had the Exec. Committee meeting. They continue to have a very strong committee even after the loss of Juliet Holmes-Smith and Justice Cuddy. They have Chris Lewis from Hardy Wolf who has been very active on this committee. So has Judge Soucy from Aroostook County. Ezra Willey, Jonathan Dunitz and Juliet Sheridan are very active members. Katie Rand is a new addition from Pierce Atwood and is very eager. Leslie Silverstein, Sara Wolff, Beth Richardson, Zach Heiden are all active members. All are loyal contributors to the committee. Judge Rich indicated they usually have two thirds of the committee present or by phone at meetings. Justice Mead commented that this is a great group of highly motivated people. Judge Rich said he could use a co-chair and hopes to get one of these members to be his co-chair if the Executive Committee agrees. Justice Mead gave Judge Rich the green light to pick one of the current members to be his co-chair on the pro bono committee. Liz Stout said she's very happy to continue on this committee. She mentioned problems delivering legal services during a pandemic. Justice Mead commented that his conversations with providers revealed that the need is even greater at this time. He said we need to be proactive to get things moving again.

- a. Emeritus Counsel subcommittee: Judge Rich reported it was off to a great start with only 4 members, but with the loss of Juliet Holmes-Smith they need one or two additions. A new initiative makes sense per Judge Rich.
- b. Mead Fellowship: Judge Rich indicated this has been discussed in some detail by committee.
- c. Katahdin Counsel: Issue is ancillary to pro bono reporting. We know that way more pro bono work is being done than is being reported in the KC numbers.

IV. Legislative Committee Report – Charlie Dingman: Charlie confirmed the need to clarify the language relating to the earlier successful funding project. Early on in the pandemic providers provided estimates of money they needed; they have applied for CARES funding, but nothing has been approved at this point. The Financial Services folks at the Legislature will be meeting again with the providers to review possible strategies for funding.

V. ACP Chair's Report – Jamie Kilbreth: Jamie reported that the providers continue to meet and collaborate regularly and are seeking avenues of funding.

VI. Justice Systems Subcommittee: Jamie reported that the Subcommittee continues to meet and may have a report at the next meeting.

VII. Executive Committee Organization Updates:

- Courts: Justice Mead reported the court is extremely busy attempting to “reinvent how we do what we do.” E-filing going live in Bangor in early October. E-filing is mandatory for lawyers but pro se people can still file by paper. Self-Represented Litigants can certainly use the E-filer system at terminals at the courthouse if they wish (they are very user friendly), but they're not required to.
- ACP: Reported above.
- VLP: Liz Stout reported that the most urgent issues the staff reported are that the CHAPs assistance programs have been closed since March. Many people have been assisted with their FlaME telephone assistance system. They are looking to resume greater functioning in October.
- MJF: Bill Harwood reported that the MJF is very pleased to have Michelle Drager as the new Executive Director. Michelle reported on Campaign for Justice—things are looking better than they thought back in April/May. They have readjusted their projections and are looking forward to a very successful campaign. IOLTA revenues seem to have stabilized. Michelle reported on the brand-new racial justice fund. It is generating a great deal of enthusiasm and support. Contributions continue to arrive.
- MSBA/Lawyers in Libraries: Frank reported above that there is support for lawyers in libraries. He will pass his notes on to the Executive Committee. They're happy to provide whatever support they can.
- MTLA: We will reach out to the MTLA to see if they would like to designate a representative for the Executive Committee

VIII. Other Business: None.

IX. Proposed 2020 JAG Executive Committee and Board meeting dates.

JAG Board: December 21 at 3:00 in Portland, Feeney Conf. Room. Will most likely be by Zoom.

Executive Committee: November 16 at 2:00 in Augusta, SJC Conference Room. Will most likely be by Zoom.