



TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL

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CHAIR:

HON. NATHAN L. HECHT
Chief Justice, Supreme Court

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

David Slayton

VICE CHAIR:

HON. SHARON KELLER
Presiding Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals

TEXAS JUDICIAL COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

February 17, 2017

10:00 AM

Tom C. Clark Building
205 W. 14th Street, 1st Floor Conference Room
Austin, Texas

COMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

On February 17, 2017, Chief Justice Nathan L. Hecht called the meeting¹ of the [Texas Judicial Council](#) ("Council") to order at approximately 10:00 AM in the Tom C. Clark Building – 1st Floor Conference Room in Austin, Texas.

The following members of the Council were present:

Hon. Nathan L. Hecht, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Texas
Hon. Sharon Keller, Presiding Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals
Hon. Gary Bellair, Presiding Judge, Ransom Canyon Municipal Court
Hon. Bill Boyce, Justice, 14th Court of Appeals, Houston
Hon. Bill Gravell Jr., Justice of the Peace Pct. 3, Williamson County
Hon. Scott Jenkins, Judge, 53rd District Court, Travis County
Hon. Kelly Moore, Judge, 121st Judicial District, Terry & Yoakum
Hon. Valencia Nash, Justice of the Peace Pct. 1, Place 2, Dallas County
Hon. Sherry Radack, Chief Justice, 1st Court of Appeals, Houston
Hon. Judith Zaffirini, State Senator, Laredo

Members Carlos Amaral, Representative Andy Murr, Hank Nuss, Judge Glenn Phillips, and Representative John Smithee attended via phone.

Members not in attendance were Richard Battle, Senator Brandon Creighton, Rick Figueroa, Allyson Ho, Ashley Johnson, Judge Linda Rodriguez, and Judge Polly Spencer (Ret.).

¹ The meeting may be viewed on the Office of Court Administration YouTube channel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4NMU1sY5Rs>

MINUTES

The [October 28, 2016](#) meeting minutes were approved.

Chief Justice Hecht discussed his [State of Judiciary](#) address to the 85th Legislature on February 1 which included recommendations on court security, judicial compensation, access to justice, bail reform, mental health issues, and guardianships.

REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS

Texas Indigent Defense Commission

Judge Keller announced three new members had been appointed to the Indigent Defense Commission (“Commission”) by Governor Abbott on December 15, 2016: Judge Missy Medary, Judge Richard Evans, and Alex Bunin, Chief Public Defender, Harris County.

Executive Director Jim Bethke then introduced two new staff members: Scott Ehlers and Morgan Shell. He also discussed legislative proposals approved by the Commission concerning the operation of the Regional Public Defender Office for Capital Cases (RPDO), the change of terms of TIDC board members to six years from two years (now filed as HB 978), repeal of the requirement that public defender attorneys must inform the court of the results of any investigation into a defendant’s financial circumstances, and creation of an innocence project grant program at the Commission.

Guardianship Compliance Pilot Project

Certification Division Director Jeff Rinard provided an overview on the current progress of the project and reported a grant was received from the National Center for State Courts for a guardianship training video. Finally, he advised of potential funding cuts.

Centers of Excellence Pilot Sites

Director for Research and Court Services Scott Griffith reviewed the program design and its purpose, discussing the nine performance categories with follow up on the pilot process and progress to date. He stated the program had been presented at the Texas Center for the Judiciary to court coordinators, another to clerks, and to a group of justices of the peace. The three pilot programs will be comprised of a single district court, a municipal court, and district or county court with different size jurisdictions. The next steps are to get specific feedback on performance criteria which are actionable and measurable and show that courts are hitting their target.

Price of Justice Grant and National Task Force on Fines, Fees and Bail Practices

Mr. Griffith discussed the grant, noting project scope, intended deliverables and existing resources. He also noted that an advisory committee has been established to work with the Office of Court Administration (“OCA”) on the grant.

Collection Improvement Program

Court Services Manager at OCA Amanda Stites provided an update on implementation of the Collection Improvement Program rules amended by the Council. Implementation has included training sessions, publication of online resources, and technical assistance provided by OCA. Judge Gravell also reported on progress of implementation in his own court with 300 percent increases in payment plans, an increase in indigency hearings, a significant increase in court cases closed because of indigency determination, and a significant increase in revenue from closed cases.

Annual Statistical Report for the Texas Judiciary

Judicial Information Manager at OCA Angela Garcia presented highlights from the [2016 Annual Statistical Report for the Texas Judiciary](#).

Mental Health Committee

Justice Bill Boyce presented the Mental Health Committee's [recommendation](#) to move forward to establish a permanent commission on mental health. Chief Justice Sherry Radack made a motion to approve the committee's recommendation. With proper motion by Chief Justice Sherry Radack and second by Judge Gravell, the recommendation was approved.

Legislative Update

Director of Public Affairs/Special Counsel at OCA Megan LaVoie provided an [update](#) on the status of Council bills for consideration by the 85th Legislature. Chief Justice Hecht also noted two additional bills related to eFiling and ReSearchTX.

NEW BUSINESS

Conference of Chief Justices Civil Justice Initiative

Discussion delayed until next meeting.

NEXT MEETING

To be determined.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:00 PM.

Nathan L. Hecht
Chair