

Family Law Commission
Meeting Minutes
June 9, 2011
9:30-11:30 - Senate Hearing Room

Members Present:

Lynn Kokjohn, Chair
Representative Bolden
WendyJean Matlack
James Morning
Judge Walls
Eileen Williams
Representative Ramone, Secretary
Senator Ennis, Vice Chair
Senator Sorenson

Members Absent:

Harriet Ainbinder
Dana Harrington-Conner
Britt Davis
Diana Metzger
Dr. Pillsbury
Peg Smith
Curtis Bounds

Liaisons Present:

Harry Gordon
Bonnie Copeland
DAG Judy Hodas
Drew Slater, Assistant

Guest Speakers:

Ken Kelemen
Brian Ang

The Family Law Commission met on Thursday June 9, 2011 to review legislation and joint resolution thoughts.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 9:43am.

The chair also mentioned that the commission cannot give any legal advice and only the members of the commission have voting power. In addition, the chair mentioned that we cannot comment on public comment as it is difficult to capture public comment in the minutes. An additional question was how do you vote on public comment and do we need to have the public vote on the minutes?

1. Approval of Minutes

Senator Ennis moved that the minutes from the May 12th meeting be approved with Senator Sorenson seconding the motion. All members present voted in favor of adopting the minutes, motion carried unanimously.

2. Guest Speakers

The chair recognized the speaker at the meeting, Ken Kelemen, to provide an update on the Family Court website and online chat feature.

Mr. Kelemen said that they are moving along with the chat feature to provide help to petitioners and respondents and they have done a survey over the last few months. They have also distributed a report on accessibility to the public, which Drew Slater has a copy of.

Mr. Kelemen stated that they are currently working on integrating the live chat into the website. Mr. Kelemen is also working on E-Court services online to help Delawareans file online. Some of these services are already online, such as custody, divorce and motions. The website is completely new and was launched on Tuesday, June 7th.

Due to a lack of resources, the Family Court cannot currently do evening hours; however, if the live chat is found to be needed after normal business hours that would be a way to help petitioners and respondents.

The website also now has resources on the website for those responding to petitions on every page so that respondents know what they are responding to and what the petition is for.

The packets online are free, whereas, there is a cost associated with the packets in the Family Court. In addition, a petitioner or respondent can now complete the forms electronically.

There were some suggestions from the commission members, such as, placing the FAQ's in the blocks to make them even more comprehensive, add a spreadsheet of what is open in the court as well as a little more detail on the statute. Another idea was to perhaps make the code linkable, which may resolve the issue with the detail of the statute.

There is currently no open access form online and one of the commission members asked if they could have that online to fill out and take to court.

Mr. Kelemen said that pro se litigants are estimated to be about 80 percent of those that file in the Family Court. The idea of the new website, and live chat, is to be a user-friendly as possible to help those that are filing in the Family Court.

It is the hope of the commission that there will be some publicity to let people know about the live chat once it is available. There will be two individuals who will talk to consumers during normal business hours and they could have evening hours depending on how many people would require the services after normal business hours. In addition, the pilot program should be statewide.

The Family Law Commission asked Mr. Kelemen if he would be available to come back next year, since the pilot program would have some time to get underway by then.

Sub-Committee Reports

No report

Pending Legislation

The next order of business was the joint resolution written by the Family Law Commission. The legislation proposed a task force and did not include a presumption of what the task force should find. The idea is that the task force would review open versus closed courts in Delaware and surrounding areas to find out if there are ways for Delaware to improve, specifically relating to open versus closed court proceedings.

Judge Walls mentioned that the proposed task force members should not include a Judge that sits on the Family Law Commission.

New Business

There was no new business

Adjournment

There was a motion to adjourn by Senator Ennis with Representative Bolden seconding. Of the members present, all were in favor of adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 11:54am.

Submitted by Drew Slater on behalf of the Family Law Commission Secretary, Representative Ramone.