

**Family Law Commission**  
Meeting Minutes  
March 15, 2012  
Senate Hearing Room

**Members Present:**

Lynn Kokjohn, Chair  
Senator Bruce Ennis, Vice Chair  
Representative Michael Ramone, Secretary  
Senator Sorenson  
Representative Stephanie Bolden  
Diana Metzger  
James Morning  
Eileen Williams  
WendyJean Matlack  
Curtis Bounds

**Liaisons Present:**

Drew Slater, Asst FLC

The Family Law Commission met on Thursday, March 15, 2012 to discuss their Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR), numbered 21, relating to the creation of a Blue Ribbon Task Force to review the issue of open family court.

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 9:33am.  
Introductions were made and meeting procedures reviewed

**1. Approval of Minutes**

Motion by Representative Ramone, Second by Senator Ennis to approve the February minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously with no abstentions.

**2. SCR 21 with Senate Amendment 1**

There is an amendment to this bill to add two members appointed by the Family Law Commission as well as one member of the public. Senator Ennis noted that this bill is ready to go on the agenda in the Senate.

There was a discussion about the 1997 task force where there was no report found in Legislative Council. In addition, this task force was chaired by a member not appointed by the task force and the Governor appointed members to the task force, which he did not have the power to do.

It was mentioned that there may be a further amendment where the Family Court would like to clarify two Judges or Commissioners.

There was a question raised as to whether this task force was stacked against an open court. Rep. Ramone mentioned that the Family Court Judges that he has spoken to believe that the court is open. The public say that they are not allowed in the meetings.

There was a discussion on the structural parameters for the court's full day and that the case may be closed when an issue is sensitive but should otherwise be open.

Ms. Raetta McCall, a member of the public, was asked to speak and she said that she went to a PFA hearing on March 7, 2012 to be a support member and the bailiff said to her that the litigant was the only one allowed in the court. PFA hearings are open to the public yet she

was not allowed into the court by the bailiff who had no right to deny her access as a support person. The bailiff did not ask the Judge but instead told her that she was not allowed in. She also mentioned that police officers say that all Family Court proceedings are closed and there was a question of who was really in charge.

The meeting then went into the decision on who should be on the task force. There was concern that the status quo may lead to a closed task force with less public input. It was also mentioned that the Legislature could make the Family Court open with a Constitutional amendment.

There was a new amendment created to show one member of the public and instead of the task force reporting its recommendations it should report its findings.

There was a motion to approve the amendment to add a member of the public by Eileen Williams, seconded by Curtis Bounds.

The commission then took some time to outline their upcoming meetings. They are to have a meeting on child support on April 26<sup>th</sup> with the intention to ask the Deputy Attorney General for child support hearings to attend the meeting and Commissioner Jones.

In May, the subject will be paternity testing with Dr. Louis Bartoshesky as our guest speaker.

In June, the subject will be Domestic Violence and Family Court Policies and Procedures. It was mentioned that we should ask Adrienne Owens from the State Police to talk about domestic violence and to see if our Family Court liaison, Shivani Honwad, would be able to speak to the Family Court policies and procedures or if we should also ask the court administrator, Guy Sapp, to attend.

There were new communications presented about DFS blocking a report from a child psychiatrist who would not write a report or testify in court. There was another communication that noted that Dean Ammons' strong recommendation is not being followed through. It was suggested by the writer that we should educate our kids at school and in our community about basic sexual safety as part of a sweeping public health initiative.

### **Adjournment**

With a motion from James Morning to adjourn the meeting, seconded by WendyJean Matlack the meeting adjourned at 10:55am.

Submitted by Drew Slater  
Assistant to the Family Law Commission