**District Court Council**

**Summary Meeting Minutes**

**March 6, 2020**

**Helena, MT**

1. **Welcome**

**Attendees: Judge Greg Todd, Chief Justice Mike McGrath, Judge Dusty Deschamps, Judge Jon Oldenburg, Judge Holly Brown, Glen Welch, Hazel Parker and Randy Brodehl (via phone)**

**Staff: Cathy Pennie and Beth McLaughlin**

1. **Public Comment –** There was no public comment.
2. **Access to Justice Legislation** – Justice Beth Baker reviewed proposed legislation from the Access to Justice Commission. The legislation would increase certain filing fees to provide enhanced legal services to low-income litigants in family law cases. The proposal was designed to reduce the amount of court time required by litigants without legal representation. By acclimation the DCC supported the requested legislation.
3. **Administrator’s Update –** Beth provided the general administrator’s update including an IT update. The FY2020 budget as reviewed as well. Beth presented a request from the District Court Automation Committee to modify the DJ Uniform Case Filing Standards. The change was approved by acclimation as a recommendation to the Supreme Court.
4. **2021 Budget Proposals** – Beth reviewed the proposed budget items for the 2021 session. The two top proposals were new judges for the 11th and 18th Judicial Districts and adding five drug courts onto the general fund matrix. Council members discussed the importance of the new judge positions in the two districts especially considering continued population growth projections. The proposals were approved by acclimation as a recommendation to the Supreme Court. .
5. **Emergency Operations Planning –**  The Council discussed a need to quickly update the emergency operations plan given advice from the National Center for State Courts about a potential pandemic. Beth said her staff would move quickly to develop best practices for courts in the event it was necessary to adjust for remote hearings or other necessary safety measures. Chief Justice McGrath indicated the Court would be ready to assist with orders as needed.
6. **Chief Justice McGrath adjourned the meeting.**