**District Court Council**

**Summary Meeting Minutes**

**April 1, 2022**

1. **Welcome**

**Attendees: Chief Justice Mike McGrath; Via Zoom: Judge Jessica Fehr, Judge Dusty Deschamps, Judge Jon Oldenburg, Judge Amy Eddy, Randy Brodehl, Glenda Travitz, Phyllis Smith, and Christine Kowalski.**

**Staff and Guests: Beth McLaughlin, Kevin Cook, Judge Shane Vannatta ,Tom Sapp, and Stephanie Morrow**

1. **Public Comment –** There was no public comment.
2. **Administrator’s Update –** Beth provided the general administrator’s update including a budget update. We are continuing to experience serious recruitment and retention issues throughout all areas of Montana. Salaries in the Judicial Branch are lower than the other two branches creating problems in areas like information technology as well. Council members and guests expressed significant concerns with workforce issues including stress on existing staff and inability to recruit staff.
3. **Safety and Security Committee Report** – Judge Shane Vannatta joined the group to present the findings from the Safety and Security Committee, which has been meeting for several months. The committee made the following decisions:
   1. Judge Eddy made a motion to adopt the recommendations; Judge Fehr 2nd the motion; approve unanimously.
   2. Judge Deschamps made a motion to allow the committee to continue its work; Judge Eddy 2nd the motion; passed unanimously.
4. **Budget proposals –**  Beth reviewed the following budget proposals:
   1. Moving drug courts that are currently federally funded from federal to state dollars; five of the courts were funding in 2021 session but the funding was not needed because of continuing federal dollars. Beth explained those five courts are not new proposals.
   2. Providing funding for a courthouse security review and start-up funding for infrastructure projects.
   3. Continuing the pretrial program

Judge Deschamps expressed concern about staff salaries and the need to increase salaries to retain and recruit staff. He noted he would prefer to not approve any proposals other than salaries. Beth explained the Branch does not generally request personal services dollars beyond what the Executive agrees to in the budget. Council members agreed the Branch should convey the importance of staff salaries to the Executive as the number one budget issue. The committee made the following decision:

* 1. Judge Oldenburg made a motion to adopt the recommendations; Judge Fehr 2nd the motion; motion approved with Judge Deschamps abstaining.

1. Chief Justice McGrath reminded members the council would need to meet in May to discuss court reporting issues. The meeting was adjourned at 1:15.