**District Court Council**

**Summary Meeting Minutes**

***Draft***

**October 6, 2021**

1. **Welcome**

**Attendees: Judge Greg Todd, Judge Dusty Deschamps, Judge Jon Oldenburg, and Judge Amy Eddy. Via Zoom: Chief Justice Mike McGrath, Randy Brodehl, Phyllis Smith, and Christine Kowalski.**

**Guests: Judge Beth Best (via Zoom)**

**Staff: Beth McLaughlin**

1. **Public Comment –** There was no public comment. Chief Justice McGrath welcomed Christine as the new Youth Court representative.
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. Beth updated the council on the ARPA funding noting that Montana Legal Services Association would be the contractor for the project. Beth requested the Council review a proposal from several judges to make it clear judges and judicial staff would have access to Full Court as requested by the judge. There have been conflicts with some clerks’ offices about this access. The request was approved by acclimation. Beth also discussed conflicts with e-filing when the judge wants e-filing added and the clerk was resistant. Council members asked for that discussion to be taken to the Commission on Technology as the e-filing rules are under their direction.
3. **Uniform Case Filing Standard Changes** – Beth presented another minor tweak to the UFCS proposed by the clerks. The request was approved by acclimation for the Supreme Court’s review.
4. **Workload Study –**  The grant money from SJI is still available for the workload study, which was delayed due to Covid-impacts. Council members agreed it needed to be done in early 2022 even in Covid-impacts were still in place. In addition to DCC members, the council added Judge Olivia Rieger and Judge Michael Hayworth to the oversight group to ensure enough rural representation. Beth said she would begin work on the contract right away with a projected start date of February.
5. **Other Issues** – Judge Eddy brought up significant issues with getting criminal defendants to the State Hospital for unfit to proceed evaluations. Judges are very concerned about mentally ill defendants waiting in jail for an evaluation. Covid has increased the problem, but it still needs to be addressed. The council directed Beth to reach out to DPHHS to start a discussion about the problem and identify potential solutions. Judge Eddy, Judge Deschamps and Judge Jessica Fehr agreed to work on the issue as well.
6. Chief Justice McGrath reminded members the council would need to meet in March 2022 to review budget proposals for the 2023 Legislature. The meeting was adjourned.