

Self-Represented Litigant Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 11, 2016
1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Telephonic Meeting Only

1. Introductions and roll call

Present: Abby Brown, Ann Goldes-Sheahan, Ed Higgins, Nolan Harris, Kay Lynn Lee, Hon. Winonna Tanner

Excused: Randy Snyder, Hon. Judge Carter, Chris Manos, Erin Farris-Olsen, Hon. David Ortley, Kayre Chatellier, Phyllis Bock

2. Public Comment about non-agenda items

None.

3. Approve July 19, 2016 Minutes

No changes or additions were required. Kay Lynn made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Ed and unanimously approved.

4. Self-Help Law Center Update

Nolan gave an update on the SHLCs. They are all fully operational and the AmeriCorps volunteers are about a month into their service. The biggest issue that the SHLCs are facing is that clerks of court are rejecting filings made by SRLs, particularly in the 4th and 20th Judicial Districts. Nolan is meeting with the clerks to find out what is going on and how the SHLCs can provide additional education to help bridge the misunderstanding. Nolan is also looking for training opportunities for the AmeriCorps volunteers if any Committee members would like to present on their areas of practice.

5. Forms Sub-Committee Update

Ed gave an update on the Forms Sub-Committee. The revised forms for dissolution with children are currently being piloted in Gallatin County, though they have not been used for long enough to generate any feedback from SRLs. Nolan and Erin conducted an in-person training on the forms in Bozeman mid-September, which Nolan reported was more of a working-group format than training presentation. A follow-up virtual training is scheduled for October 18, 2016 which will be focused on use of the forms as well as the role the SHLCs can play in helping litigants with the forms. MLSA, with grant funding, is automating the forms and in-house testing is underway. MLSA will soon be moving to end-user testing of the automated forms. Finally, Ed as the Committee to offer some direction as to what the Sub-Committee should work on next. Abby suggested that conversation wait until the end of the meeting when a broader discussion as to the direction of the full Committee will be discussed.

6. Education & Outreach Sub-Committee Update

Nolan became the new Chair of the Education & Outreach Sub-Committee. Ann and Kay Lynn will join him as members. Nolan's work with the SHLC is shifting to being based less on providing forms and more on providing education and training to SRLs and other parties with whom SRLs work. Nolan suggested the work of this sub-committee would dovetail nicely with the work of the SHLC, which the other Committee members agreed.

7. Legislative Changes Sub-Committee Update

Abby provided an update on the A2J Commission's directive regarding the Committee's role in legislative changes/monitoring for the 2017 Legislative session. The Commission decided that there are enough groups already looking at proposed legislation and bills that may impact SRLs (including the Office of Court Administrator, MLSA, and the State Bar). Thus, the Commission directed that this Committee monitor bills as they come up via one of these other outlets and, should the Committee identify a bill that should be further considered by the Commission, the Committee notify Randy Snyder (a Committee and Commission member) and he will notify the Commission. Any lobbying or activity on proposed legislation should not be done as part of the Committee or Commission, but instead through established channels such as the State Bar lobbyist.

Abby suggested that, based on this directive from the Commission, the Committee consider reviewing and tailoring the legislative Changes of its Strategic Plan to fit this directive at its next in-person meeting.

8. Update re: Standardize Fee Waiver Form/Financial Affidavit

Abby reported that Randy had presented the Standardized Fee Waiver form to the Commission at the September 9th A2J Commission meeting. At the time of the Commission meeting Randy was still discussing the form with a representative of the AG's office, Stu Segrest. The Commission liked the form and gave the Committee the green light to pursue getting the new form mandated throughout Montana through the appropriate process – which is either a change to the statute or a local rule. It is not yet clear which of those paths will be taken. Randy is still spearheading this effort and is the contact person for anyone with questions.

9. Update re: ATJ 9/9 Meeting & Discussion re: Committee Direction

Nolan gave an update regarding the presentation he and Justice Baker are doing at the MT Judges Association meeting this week. Nolan will focus on discussion regarding the pilot forms and revisions to SHLC website and other forms. Justice Baker will present on the A2J Commission, the civil legal aid grant, court-annexed mediation program, and the Standardized Fee Waiver Form.

Abby reported on the September 9th A2J Commission meeting, focusing on the Justice for All grant for which the Commission is applying and will be awarded in November. Based on the type of grant it is possible that some of the work this Committee is doing

might change or at least be informed by the grant, if awarded to Montana. Therefore, the Committee decided to wait and have the next full Committee meeting in January 2017, after the A2J Commission meeting.

In the meantime, the Forms Sub-Committee will continue to work off an MSLA inventory that identified existing forms that need editing and/or updating to be consistent with statute and rules, particularly as it relates to privacy. The Education and Outreach Sub-Committee will get together to discuss a path forward that integrates the Committee's strategic plan with the educational materials and needs Nolan has identified at the SHLC.

10. New Business

Abby reminded the Committee members that we have lost a significant number of members in the last year or two. She asked everyone to think of those groups who are not represented on this Committee (i.e. clerks of court on all levels) and either approach those individuals about being part of the Committee or submit their names to Ann and Abby in order for them to reach out to them. The January 2017 meeting would be a good first meeting for those individuals to attend.

11. Next Meeting Date

- a. A2J Commission Meeting (December 9)
- b. The Next Committee Meeting will be an in-person meeting in Helena in January 2017 (with call-in information available). Ann will send out a Doodle Poll to the Committee to determine a specific date and time. This meeting will be looking at the Committee's strategic plan, the updates from the Commission, and the projects that the Committee believes it will be able to take on for 2017-2018.