

**PHILADELPHIA BAR ASSOCIATION**  
**FAMILY LAW SECTION MEETING MINUTES**

**JULY 13, 2020**

*Chair, Randi L. Rubin, Esquire, presided.*

- I. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:** Chair, Randi Rubin called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m. The meeting was conducted via ZOOM and present was Judge Margaret Murphy, Administrative Judge of Family Court; Judge Doris Pechkurow, Judge Tiffany Palmer, Judge Daniel Sulman, Clerk of Court William Schenk, Esquire, law clerks Bridget Wilusz and Benjamin Quintana, Masters Dennis O’Connell, Michael Viola and Jacqueline Vergara as well as Deputy Court Administration Ed Lehman. Also present was Philadelphia Bar Association Chancellor A. Michael Snyder.

Overall there were approximately 75 people in attendance via Zoom.

- II. **CORRECTIONS OR ADDITIONS TO MINUTES:** Not addressed.

- III. **TREASURER’S REPORT:** The financial information was not available as of the time of the meeting.

- IV. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

A. On July 15, 2020 at 3:00 p.m., there will be a Ring Central Training via Zoom.

B. The Summer Soiree will occur sometime in August 2020. Randi will submit a survey to the section to determine if it should be via Zoom or in an outdoor setting.

C. CLE – Judge McLaughlin and Helen Casale to present an appellant practice CLE in the fall.

- V. **PROGRAM:** Review of the Order of May 15, 2020 regarding the resumption of Family Court operations with Judge Margaret Murphy, Administrative Judge of Family Court.

- A. Court Operations:

1. All 750 court employees are back in the building.
2. About 45 people are quarantined at any given time either due to a potential Covid exposure or active Covid. To be clear – there are not 45 Covid cases. It could be because of travel that a Court employee or judge is in a self-imposed, city or state mandated quarantine which makes them unable to come to work or hear cases.
3. To protect the safety and health of court staff and to prevent the spread to Covid, the court is generally not permitting people in the building.
4. Some judges have permitted live testimony for good cause.
5. Some counsel have health concerns and do not want to come into the building.

- B. Request for a Drop Box/Alternative to Mail in Payments:
  - 1. If inside the building, there are concerns with exposing the sheriff to repeated interaction with people. The court will explore an option outside of the building, but it needs to be secure (like a mailbox).
  - 2. The court is exploring an electronic payment system, which may alleviate the need for a drop box or the mailing of checks for filing fees.
  
- C. Read receipts on emails:
  - 1. Joe Kaminski and Bill Schenk are mostly handling the email pleadings. If a read receipt is requested by the sender, the Court will accept.
  - 2. Emailed time-stamped pleadings will not be sent, however hard copies of filed pleadings are being mailed in every case. Contact Bill if you are not receiving filings.
  
- D. Ed Lehman – Deputy Court Administration: discussed ring central and other matters.
  - 1. Ring Central will include an option to upload documents to a share point folder for presentation of evidence.
  - 2. There will be separate folders for each party, the adversary will not have access to the documents prior to the hearing.
  - 3. If something is loaded accidentally, you can delete it prior to the hearing.
  - 4. Email addresses for Domestic Violence Survivors are protected from disclosure so that confidentiality is maintained.
  - 5. The court is envisioning a remote operations section on their website for tech support and information.
  
- E. Rescheduling cases from March through June (December) –
  - 1. New PFA filings get 7 – 10 days of notice. Rescheduled matters should be a minimum of 7 days.
  - 2. Master’s units about 20 days’ notice.
  - 3. The problem that keeps arising is unexpected court closures.
  - 4. The court is abandoning email notices and will use mail notices.
  
- F. Paternity Testing – the Court is entering into a contract with an outside agency/vendor that is Covid compliant to take the swabs. The Court will begin making the referrals once the contract is completed. The location of the vendor is in the Center City area.
  
- G. Home Studies – they court staff are not going into residences due to Covid-19. There is no anticipated date as to when home studies will resume.
  
- H. Mental Health Assessments – presently not occurring and may not lend themselves to virtual evaluations.
  
- I. Drug Testing – presently not occurring in the Family Court building.

- J. Hearings – protracted hearings are taking place, semi-protracted and all other hearings will be rescheduled. Attorneys must notify the court of address changes for themselves and their clients.
- K. Online Docket Access – Family Court access is linked through the civil e-file system and access has been sporadic. This is being worked on, in the meantime if you cannot access the docket, please email Bill Schenk.
- L. Language Access – The court has 2 Spanish interpreters, the court also utilizing Language Line. The email notices did not include language access information, but the court will resume using the mail notices which include language information.

**VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS:** Committee meeting times/dates and announcements are disseminated over the Family Law Section’s listserv.

**VII. MINDFUL/WELLNESS TIP:** None.

**VIII. GOOD & WELFARE:** None.

**NEXT SECTION MEETING:** The next Family Law Section Next Meeting will take place on, August 3, 2020 at 12:00 p.m. via Zoom. The program will be “The Virtual Hearing”.

**NEXT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING:** The next meeting will be on July 16, 2020 at 12:00 and will take place via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

*Aneesah El-Amin-Jaamia*  
Aneesah El-Amin-Jaamia, Secretary

**ATTACHMENTS (NONE):**