

Minutes of Citizens Advisory Committee on Jury Selection
Friday, November 20, 2009
Brookens Administrative Center, Putman Meeting Room

Call to Order: County Board Chair Ammons called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Roll Call: Seven members appointed from the General Public were present: Aaron Ammons, Bill Brown, Brian Dolinar, Barbara Kessel, Joan Miller, Jennifer Putman, Ken Turner. Three members appointed from the General Public were absent: Tricia Avery (excused), Lorraine Cowart, Patrick Thompson. Two Elected Officials were present: Justice & Social Services Committee Chair Matt Gladney, County Board Chair C. Pius Weibel. Two Court Officials were present: Court Administrator Roger Holland, Public Defender Randy Rosenbaum. One Court Official was excused: Judge Thomas Difanis.

Approval of Agenda, Minutes (October 23, 2009): The agenda was approved as distributed. Minutes of October 23, 2009 were approved as corrected.

Announcements/Communications: Chair Ammons announced the November 23 National Day of Outrage rally, sponsored by C-U Citizens for Peace and Justice and the National Action Network. Administrator Holland responded to several inquiries from Putman and Brown, as follows: (1) After someone has completed a term of jury service, is that person's name immediately returned to the pool of qualified jurors, making the individual subject to repeat terms of jury service? A: Jurors are not required to serve more than once every 12 months. (2) What accounts for the presence of duplicate names in the "Summonses Sent" and "No Response" lists? A: People sometimes misplace their summons document, and then contact the Court to request a duplicate. (3) [similar to Question 1] After a name has been randomly selected, is that name dropped from the Master List to prevent the same person from being summoned again the very next month? A: No one is called to serve more often than once every 12 months. (4) Is there a way to purge responses to Juror Questionnaires that are older than, say, two years? A: Because the Administrative Office of Illinois Courts (AOIC) prohibits the purging of Juror Questionnaires, these documents are retained.

Brown offered to form a CACJS work group that could take a closer look at the Court's software, perhaps meeting with Jano System Administrator Kirk Bedwell to better understand the data processing steps and their timing, and to produce a clear flowchart for the group's further discussion.

Update on Use of Revised Juror Qualification Questionnaire: Courts Administrator Holland reported that in the second week of November, Judge Difanis's letter to prospective jurors—expressing appreciation for their willingness to serve and describing trial by a jury of one's peers as "the foundation of the American justice system"—began to be included in the mailing with the Juror Qualification Questionnaire. Because the county's Judicial System vendor—Gary Dower of Tyler, Texas—required time to develop the computer's ability to read the extensively revised questionnaires, they are not expected to be in use until sometime during the first quarter of 2010. No date has

been set to begin use of Judge Difanis's second letter (which is addressed to persons who have not returned a completed Juror Qualification Questionnaire).

Discussion on Jury Stipend: Holland briefed the group on the current annual cost of juror per diems. At \$10 per juror per day, the cost to the County's General Corporate fund is \$134,000. Increasing the per diem to \$15 per day would cost the General Corporate Fund an additional \$67,000. Doubling the per diem to \$20 per day would cost \$268,000. Holland noted that Judge Difanis decided in part to reduce the number of jury trial days in FY2010 in order to reduce the annual expenditure for juror per diems. Gladney noted that some counties, such as Peoria and Sangamon, pay higher per diems than Champaign. He recommended consulting officials in other counties to learn how they manage to afford the higher juror stipends. Putman volunteered to request survey information available through the Illinois Association of County Board Members and Commissioners (IACBMC). Ammons emphasized the burden experienced by lower-income jurors—especially those whose employers do not pay jury duty leave—in having to accept \$10 for a day of service.

Legislative Agenda (Discussion): Rosenbaum offered to serve on a lobbying team that could contact area legislators to advocate changes in state law. The CACJS legislative agenda could include (1) state subsidization of the per diems that counties pay to jurors; (2) opposition to punitive charges against persons who fail to appear for jury duty; (3) a jury pool broader than that currently allowed by state law; (4) creation of a tax credit for employers whose personnel policies include paid jury leave.

Jury Commission (Discussion): Dolinar recommended inviting members of the Jury Commission to a future meeting to share their observations of the reasons given when people ask to be excused from jury duty. Dolinar is concerned about the significance of low per diem compensation in discouraging jurors' willingness to serve. Miller reported occasions when, as a LWV observer of the Jury Commission and in court trials, she witnessed prospective jurors stating "I cannot serve because I cannot afford to." Putman volunteered to obtain the 2010 schedule of Jury Commission meetings. Kessel suggested the CACJS urge the governing bodies of UIUC and Parkland College to adopt policies that avoid penalizing students who, in the course of reporting for jury duty, miss taking an exam or meeting some other academic deadline.

New Business: Chair Ammons recommended the CACJS invite members of the Ministerial Alliance to participate at its January 2010 meeting. By consensus, members urged Ammons to ask the ministers to attend a meeting at any time in the near future that would be convenient for them.

Public Participation: UIUC graduate student Jordan Turner shared his recent experience when summoned to Grand Jury duty in Vermilion County. Exceedingly busy at the time with academic responsibilities, Mr. Turner had asked to be excused.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Friday, December 18.

Adjournment: Chair Ammons adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Jennifer Putman, Recording Secretary