

Wyoming District Judges Conference

Business Meeting

April 25, 2024

The Spring 2024 meeting of the District Judges Conference was held on April 25, 2024, at the Cowboy Village meeting room in Jackson, Wyoming. The meeting occurred in person. Present in person at the meeting were Judges Catherine Rogers, Misha Westby, Rick Lavery, Dawnessa Snyder, Jason Conder, Kate McKay, Joe Bluemel, Ed Buchanan, Dan Forgey, Scott Peasley, Peter Froelicher, Kerri Johnson, Bobbi Overfield, Darci Phillips, Melissa Owens, Robin Cooley, James Kaste, Michael Causey, Steve Sharpe, Suzannah Robinson, Josh Eames and retired Judge Tom Campbell. Absent Judges were Catherine Wilking, Stu Healy, Ben Kirven, and Bill Simpson. Also present as guests were Mona, Ellen O'Neill-Stephens, and Joy Lyngar.

Chairman Rogers called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

Minutes of the December 8, 2023, business meeting were presented, reviewed, and accepted. The Treasurer's Report of April 25, 2024, was presented, reviewed, and accepted.

Old Business

District Court Conference Rules – Judge Kaste; Judge Lavery, Kaste, and Froelicher revised the District Court Conference Rules. The rules committee did a complete overhaul of the rules to organize and make the rules more consistent. Judge Bluemel moved to approve the proposed rule changes, and Judge Buchanan seconded. The proposed amended rules passed with an amendment.

Mental Health Diversion Program – Judge Darci Phillips. Campbell County is working on the mental health diversion program at the misdemeanor level. They continue to work on the rules and parameters for the program.

Court Navigator Program Update – Judge Johnson. The program is up and running. There is an in-person navigator who is the head of the Casper College paralegal program. They have taken their first clients. They are revamping the forms to help with the program. The commissioners have given the program space in the courthouse in the program.

Chancery Court Update – Judge Sharpe. There was a rule change to the 150 day timeline after the scheduling conference instead of filing. Judge Sharpe had the first trial. There are problems with the opt-out and forum shopping. It is difficult to do complex civil business litigation on the 150 day timeline so it does not always serve the purpose of the specialized court.

Committee Reports

Human Resources Committee – Judges Froelicher, Robinson. HR committee has been busy once a month, The classification structure was finalized. There was a 5.4 million exception request granted by the legislature to bring employees to 94% of the market like the executive branch. The market is the midpoint of each salary range. The last raised in July 2023 was to get all employees to 84% of the market. There was a lot of discussion on how to compensate for longevity. The HR committee will make a recommendation to the WJC on raises but the WJC will make the final decision. If they get everyone to 94% it will create compression.

Wyoming Judicial Council Update – Judges Rogers/Bluemel/Snyder

Snyder provides weekly updates on the Executive Committee meeting. There was a March strategic meeting. Judge Bluemel’s position on the WJC expires in June. Judge Froelicher moved to reappoint Judge Bluemel and Judge Lavery seconded the motion which passed. The conference discussed future leadership appointments and seniority not dictating the positions. It was proposed that there be an early call for nominations. The conference also discussed a reduction in the caseload for the chair.

Legislative Liaison and Relation Committees – Judge Peasley and Judge Condor provided updates on the legislative activities. Joint judiciary meetings in 2024 are 6/16-6/17, 9/19-9/20, 11/7-11/8.

Court Reporter Committee – Judge Overfield. The court reporter committee submitted a proposed rule change which passed through two separate special questions. The committee also is discussing the use of names versus numbers for jury selection.

Docket Review Committee – Judge Rogers

Contact from legislator

WJC Education committee

File & Serve Express rollout – Judge McKay would like the conference to discuss adopting policy decisions statewide on some of the ways we process information through FSX.

Judicial Conference September 9-11, 2024, in Cheyenne, Wyoming

Legislative Breakfast January 15, 2025, at the Wyoming Supreme Court

Good of the Order

Members present then addressed the Good of the Order

Adjournment

Judge Froelicher then moved to adjourn the meeting, Judge Eames seconded the motion and members present unanimously approved the motion.

Submitted this 11th day of September 2024.



Dawnessa A. Snyder
Secretary/Treasurer