

Minutes of Citizens Advisory Committee for Jury Selection
Friday, May 15, 2009
Brookens Administrative Center, Jennifer K. Putman Meeting Room
1776 E. Washington St., Urbana, Illinois

Call to Order: Weibel called the meeting to order at 5:35. Weibel announced that he had not procured a tape recorder for the meeting.

Roll Call: Eight members appointed from the general public were present: Aaron Ammons, Patricia Avery, William Brown, Lorraine Cowart, Joan Miller, Jennifer Putman, Patrick Thompson, Ken Turner. Two members appointed from the general public were absent: Brian Dolinar, Barbara Kessel. Three Court or Elected Officials were present: Judge Thomas Difanis, Justice & Social Services Committee Chair Matt Gladney, County Board Chair Pius Weibel. In respect of three members' participation at their first meeting, Weibel invited members to introduce/reintroduce themselves.

Approval of Agenda: Cowart offered a motion for approval of the agenda, which was seconded by Avery and approved by voice vote.

Approval of Minutes: Ammons moved approval of the minutes of April 20, 2009; motion seconded by Cowart and approved by voice vote.

Public Participation: None.

Election of Chair: Putman moved nomination of Avery, second by Weibel. Avery moved nomination of Ammons, second by Difanis. Weibel closed nominations without dissent. Voice vote indicated 9 votes for Ammons and 2 votes for Avery. Weibel declared Ammons CACJC Chairperson. Ammons took over to chair the remainder of the meeting.

Election of Vice-Chair: By unanimous consent, members approved Avery as Vice-Chair.

Election of Secretary: Cowart moved nomination of Putman as Secretary, second by Avery. Nomination was closed without dissent. By unanimous consent, members approved Putman as Secretary. Putman took over duty of recording minutes from Weibel.

Review of Jury Orientation Video: Members watched the videotape, provided by Court Administrator Holland, that jurors view when they arrive for orientation on the first day of jury duty. Members asked the following questions: Do jurors have an opportunity to ask individual questions after viewing the tape as a group? (Ans: Yes, a judge is present at orientation to respond to queries.) How is it possible for a juror to hear more than one trial in a term? Could fresh fruit be added to the choice of snacks available to jurors? Can CACJS members review the written suggestions placed in the Courthouse Suggestion Box? Could the questionnaire about jury experience and solicitation for suggestions be made on Monday, for the benefit of jurors who may not return later in their week of service?

New Business: Weibel discussed the page on the county's Web site that will be dedicated to CACJS. Members agreed to the convention of identifying e-mail messages sent among members by typing "CACJS" as the first characters in the Subject Line. Judge Difanis was asked to consider deleting from the Juror Qualification Questionnaire items 8 through 13 in Section D—

Biographical Information (the questions that ask whether the juror or a family member has been charged or convicted of a criminal offense, is on probation or parole, or has been a victim of crime). Miller and Putman commented on the May 11 press conference at which the 2008–09 CourtWatch report was made public, and members reacted to the *News-Gazette* editorial on the subject (published May 14, 2009). Members expressed additional viewpoints and made the following suggestions:

- Include with official Summons and Jury Qualification Questionnaire a dignified message typed on letterhead stationery, thanking citizens for their service; consider use of testimonial when producing PSAs (e.g., "My recent jury experience was good in that . . ." or "No one should experience what I did when I was tried for . . .") [Brown]
- Produce a video similar to the DVD that currently features Judge Ladd and Sheriff's Office personnel, but "tweaked" to appeal to the audience we seek to reach (e.g., narrated by a figure well respected among youths and in the minority community) [Avery]
- Explore the reasons for minority individuals' failure to receive Summonses; implement a system allowing individuals who are qualified and willing to serve as jurors to submit their contact information to court officials [Thompson]
- Confer with Professors Beckett and Gunsalus about adding a voir dire component to future Courtwatch studies in which observers would note whether a racial correlation exists in the exercise of peremptory challenges [Putman]
- Adopt a three-pronged approach to mission of the CACJS: (1) Address practical difficulties (e.g., low juror compensation); (2) Overcome distribution problems and objectionable content of Summons and Qualification Questionnaire; and (3) Promote "coolness" of jury service [Gladney]
- Involve offices of Illinois Secretary of State in awareness promotion campaign; draw on talent and networking each member brings to the CACJS [Ammons]

Schedule Next Meeting: The CACJS will next meet at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, June 19 in the Putman Meeting Room at the Brookens Center. Members will prepare to discuss the 2008-09 Courtwatching report. Joan Miller will invite Professors Beckett and Gunsalus to attend the meeting to answer questions about the report.

Public Participation: None

Adjournment: Chair Ammons adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Putman
C. Pius Weibel