



Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of
Maryland

Hon. Donine Carrington-Martin
Circuit Court for Charles County

Hon. Audrey J. S. Carrión
Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

Hon. Karen Christy Holt Chesser
District Court in St. Mary's County

Hon. Kathleen Duvall
Chair, Conference of Circuit Court
Clerks

Nancy Faulkner, Secretary
Deputy State Court Administrator

Hon. Jeffrey S. Getty
Circuit Court for Allegany County

Kristin Grossnickle
Chair, Conference of Circuit Court
Administrators

Hon. Fred S. Hecker
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit
Judges

Kathy Hefner, Administrative Clerk
District Court in Montgomery County

Hon. Geoffrey Hengerer
District Court in Baltimore City

Hon. James A. Kenney, III
Chair, Senior Judges Committee

Stephanie Medina
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit
Court Administrators

Hon. John P. Morrissey, Chief Judge
District Court of Maryland

Judy Rupp
State Court Administrator

Hon. Bonnie G. Schneider
District Court in Cecil County

Hon. Shaem Spencer
District Court in Anne Arundel County

Lara Stone, Administrative Clerk
District Court in Harford County

Hon. Kevin Tucker
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit
Court Clerks

Roberta Warnken, Chief Clerk
District Court of Maryland

Hon. E. Greg Wells
Chief Judge, Appellate Court of
Maryland

Hon. Alan M. Wilner
Chair, Standing Committee on Rules of
Practice and Procedure

MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL

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Meeting Minutes
September 27, 2023

Judicial Council Members Present:

Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair	Hon. James Kenney, III
Hon. Donine Carrington-Martin	Stephanie Medina
Hon. Audrey J.S. Carrión	Judy Rupp
Hon. Karen Christy Holt Chesser	Hon. Bonnie G. Schneider
Hon. Kathleen Duvall	Hon. Shaem Spencer
Nancy Faulkner	Lara Stone
Hon. Jeffrey S. Getty	Hon. Kevin Tucker
Kristin Grossnickle	Roberta L. Warnken
Hon. Fred S. Hecker	Hon. E. Greg Wells
Kathy Hefner	Hon. Alan M. Wilner
Hon. Geoffrey Hengerer	

Others Present:

Hon. Vicki Ballou-Watts	Kelley O'Connor
Melissa Canada	Suzanne Pelz
Maureen Denihan	Matthew Pipkin, Jr
Cynthia Jurrius	Sharon Reed
Hon. Stacy Mayer	Carly Roché
Hon. John Nugent	Gillian Tonkin

A meeting of the Judicial Council was held on Wednesday, September 27, 2023, at the Maryland Judicial Center, beginning at 9:30 a.m. Chief Justice Matthew Fader welcomed attendees and announced that the meeting was being livestreamed on mdcourts.gov.

Justice Fader then moved for approval of the minutes from the May 24, 2023, meeting. Judge James Kenney made a motion with a second from Judge Donine Carrington-Martin. After hearing no objections, the minutes were adopted by general consent.

1. Committee/Strategic Initiative Updates

a. Legislative Committee

Judge Stacy Mayer is the chair of the Legislative Committee and introduced Kelley O'Connor, Suzanne Pelz, and Matthew Pipkin from AOC Government Relations and Public Affairs. During the 2023 session of the Maryland General Assembly, 2,284 bills were

introduced. Of those, 572 bills were analyzed for potential impact on the Judiciary, and the Legislative Committee maintained a position on 198 active bills. Judge Mayer went on to summarize the major issues, many of which go into effect on October 1, 2023.

The Cannabis Reform Act renames the Alcohol and Tobacco Commission to the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Commission (ATCC) and brings several changes to the regulation of cannabis in Maryland. For example, the amount of cannabis allowed for personal use will change and the fine will decrease for smoking cannabis in public. Notably, Judge Mayer explained that the bill will prohibit law enforcement from initiating a stop or search based solely on the odor of cannabis.

Judge Fred Hecker noted that the term *cannabis* is defined as a plant, or any part thereof, and inquired whether the law applies to the synthetic form as well. Judge Mayer stated the synthetic derivative will likely be added to the language in the future. Judge John Morrissey recently hosted a presentation by the ATCC that addressed many of the District Court judges' questions regarding the new law. Judge Mayer added that Peter Saquella at the Judicial College is working on a webinar for judges to attend in late November or early December.

The Child Victims Act of 2023 eliminates the statute of limitations for initiating action arising out of alleged sexual abuse while the victim was a minor. Judge Mayer stated there was a lot of discussion regarding the constitutionality of this bill. A party may appeal from an interlocutory order entered by a circuit court.

The Gun Safety Act of 2023 will prohibit persons from wearing, carrying, or transporting a firearm in specified areas such as museums, sporting events, and areas with an alcohol license. The penalty will increase from 3 to 5 years for transporting a handgun illegally and expand prohibitions for persons who cannot possess a firearm. However, Judge Mayer explained that the bill does not prohibit the administrative head of a Maryland court from adopting individual rules and regulations regarding the possession of weapons on court property. Based on the broad wording of the bill, Judge Mayer anticipates future legislation to modify the language will be proposed.

Senate Bill 290 expands the investigative jurisdiction of the Independent Investigations Division of the Office of the Attorney General (OAG). The bill also expands the prosecutorial authority of the OAG with respect to police-involved incidents or those that may constitute a civil rights violation.

The Reproductive Health Protection Act prohibits issuance of a subpoena/summons if the case relates to the violation of another state's criminal law involving assistance with legally protected health care. The bill took effect on June 1, 2023.

House Bill 14 repeals the authority of a court to grant a limited divorce and alters the grounds for an absolute divorce. Most grounds for divorce will be repealed except mutual consent, and the bill will add a 6-month separation and irreconcilable differences as grounds. In addition, parties who have lived separate lives will be deemed separated even if they reside in the same home. Judge Mayer added that anyone who filed for divorce prior to October 1, 2023, may petition to have their application amended.

Judge Mayer continued the discussion by explaining changes in probation before judgement (PBJ) agreements. Although a PBJ is not considered a conviction in Maryland, a guilty or no contest plea with a PBJ disposition still carries collateral consequences with respect to immigration issues. As a work around, parties may enter into a PBJ agreement where the defendant pleads not guilty, but agrees there is enough evidence to find them guilty. The court then agrees to defer the entry of a conviction with reasonable conditions. Judge Mayer added that if the terms of the agreement are violated, the defendant agrees not to argue the facts of the case and a sentence may be imposed. It is important to note that all parties, including the state and the judge, must consent to a PBJ agreement. A new form and a bench card were developed to assist staff and guide judges.

A few other bills worth noting include one additional judgeship for the Circuit Court for Baltimore County, the Assurance of Child's Safety Act that requires the court to hold an expedited hearing if a party proposes relocation of a child, and the Maryland Child Abduction Prevention Act that authorizes a court to order abduction prevention measures if a credible risk is established. Finally, the REDEEM Act of 2023 shortens the waiting period for filing a petition to expunge certain criminal convictions and expands eligibility to include several hunting offenses.

House Bill 127 also prohibits the District Court in a small claims action from ordering the appearance of an individual to enforce a money judgement. Judge Mayer added that alternative collection measures are allowed but the goal of the bill is to prevent parties from being incarcerated for failing to appear.

Judge Mayer discussed a few bills that did not pass, but will likely appear again in 2024. The Public Disclosure of Personal Information for certain court officials such as judges and magistrates generated a lot of interest. Following several debates, the bill was weighed down by questions or arguments and ultimately did not pass.

Remote Public Access and Participation was another popular topic that would allow the public to view live hearings remotely unless it is deemed confidential. Judge Mayer explained that the bill would require additional equipment and personnel in each courtroom and would have a significant fiscal impact on the Judiciary. The proposal was strongly argued and did not pass.

The Tenant Safety Act addressed a landlord's failure to repair serious and dangerous defects in a rental unit and additional tenant remedies. Judge Mayer stated that the terms established in this bill would be extremely difficult for District Court to enforce.

Senate Bill 88 proposed automatic expungement of records relating to a conviction of possession of cannabis under Criminal Law § 5-601. Judge Mayer stated there was very high interest in this bill, and she expects to see this proposal, again.

Finally, the Private Home Detention Monitoring (PHDM) bill would alter existing notification requirements to the court when a monitored defendant has been missing for more than 24 hours. PHDM has proven to be helpful in jurisdictions that do not offer a pre-trial program and Judge Mayer anticipates seeing this bill, again.

b. Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee

Judge John Nugent from the Circuit Court for Baltimore City is chair and spoke on behalf of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Committee. He introduced Cynthia Jurrius, the Director of the Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO), and Maureen Denihan, the Director of District Court's ADR Office, as staff of the committee. Judge Nugent added that Annamaria Walsh, the Director of the ADR Division of the Appellate Court, is also a valuable staff member on the committee but was unable to attend the meeting.

The ADR Committee gained six new members this year. Goals for the committee this year involved providing information about remote ADR processes, collecting ADR data for qualitative evaluation, and advancing the Rules amendment process for a statewide ADR Roster application.

At a previous Judicial Council meeting there were questions about the difference in outcomes of in-person hearings versus remote hearings. In response, MACRO compiled a data summary of domestic/family law cases and civil, non-domestic cases from District Court, circuit courts, and the Appellate Court in FY22. Over 50% of remote ADR hearings and 63% of in-person hearings in civil, non-domestic cases resulted in a full agreement. Historically, only 52% of in-person hearings resulted in full agreements, however, remote hearings from 2013 – 2022 resulted in almost identical results, 50%. Family law cases also showed comparable results for remote hearings; 39% in FY22 and 37% from 2013 – 2022. Finally, a satisfaction survey was conducted for feedback from the participants in ADR hearings. Overall, 58% of remote participants strongly agreed with satisfaction from their experience.

Judge Nugent was pleased with the fact that full agreements were accomplished at a similar rate for both in-person and remote hearings. The conclusion can be drawn that transitioning to remote hearings created little to no complaints or technological issues. The committee will continue to collect data and report on the success of remote ADR hearings.

Justice Fader expressed appreciation for the settlement rate follow up. He noted that more responses were received for remote hearings (270) than in-person hearings (35) and stated it is difficult to draw statistical conclusions with the agreement rate when the responses are heavily one-sided. He also found it interesting that remote hearings occurred 5 – 7 times more than in-person hearings and wondered if the trend would continue once the data pool becomes more robust. Justice Fader added that it will be interesting to see how location affects the numbers as certain jurisdictions rely more on remote options. Ms. Jurrius added that some jurisdictions were early adopters of taking the surveys and their frequent participation may also skew the numbers.

The committee also oversees the work of two subcommittees and one workgroup. The ADR in the Maryland Rules Subcommittee worked on provisions to Title 17 to establish a centralized application process for ADR practitioners to be placed on court rosters. After applying online, Judge Nugent explained that a MACRO representative will review the application to determine whether the applicant meets the minimum qualifications and track the continuing education requirements. The original idea was to send the application to the jurisdictions of interest for review, however, the feedback from the Rules Committee was to keep it central. The revisions have been made and will be presented to the Conference of Circuit Judges (CCJ) in January. The subcommittee also weighed in on changes to the Rules for remote ADR hearings following the recommendations from the Joint Subcommittee on Post COVID-19 Operations.

The District Court ADR Subcommittee worked on establishing Case Disposition Information Sheets that will be utilized the day of trial. The form will assist self-represented litigants in understanding the outcome on their case based on the terms of their agreement. The purpose of the Workgroup on Mediation Quality Assurance and Practitioners (MQAP) is to review best practices for court-based ADR programs and study the issue of assessing mediation quality. The next project is to establish best practices for court mediation. Judge Nugent stated that the members are discussing whether this project can be absorbed by the ADR Committee members or if it will require the assistance of the MQAP workgroup.

Ms. Jurrius continued by stating that she frequently briefs the ADR Committee on behalf of MACRO and requests input and feedback from committee members. As part of the court ADR initiative, online surveys were utilized to collect data and determine the needs of the courts following the COVID-19 pandemic. MACRO also engages monthly with the circuit court ADR program managers, which has been beneficial for maintaining support. Topics of the meetings include diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as the evolution of the ADR tab (labeled Arbitration) in MDEC.

The MACRO homepage was also redesigned to be more user-friendly for the public, courts, and practitioners. In addition, an online dispute resolution system was procured and will be further explained by the Major Projects Committee. Ms. Jurrius added that she is proud of the development of a web-based platform as part of the Maryland Program for Mediator Excellence (MPME). The platform has already been integrated with the Judiciary's website and is ready to launch the new statewide roster application once the process is approved.

Ms. Jurrius stated that 37 ADR grants were awarded in FY22. Circuit courts received 9 of those grants and the remaining 28 support the work of community justice partners and services. Lisa Mannisi was also hired as the Complex Litigation Program Manager following the Complex Litigation program's move from Problem-Solving Courts. She will also staff the Complex Litigation Program of the CCJ.

In addition, MACRO continues to support practitioners with continuing education opportunities. For public awareness, an online resource guide was developed, and more than 1,500 participants attended educational programs. In conjunction with the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law (UMD), MACRO provided a conflict resolution fellows public policy program for leaders across the state. A research project is underway for online dispute resolution engagement for persons with disabilities. There is a new ADR Research and Evaluation webpage available where users can access valuable research from across the state.

Ms. Denihan added that the District Court ADR Subcommittee developed a pre-/post-trial ADR referral program where individuals have access to 11 community mediation centers as well as the UMD Mediation Clinic. These resources are available to litigants before and after a court decision is made. In FY23, 994 litigants utilized the services of the referral program, most of whom were tenants who received the Notice of Intent to File for Summary Ejectment in landlord/tenant matters. The remote program provided ADR services online to 176 participants last year, resulting in a 62% agreement rate. Pre-trial mediations done in-person through the mediation centers have roughly the same agreement rate, and are almost back to pre-COVID numbers. Ms. Denihan added that programs are now available in Garrett and Allegany County, largely due to the support of their judges. Judge Bonnie Schneider asked if a litigant's hearing type (remote vs. in-person) is determined by their preference, through various resources, or a combination of the two. Judge Nugent explained that the Maryland Rule now includes language assigning that responsibility to the discretion of the practitioner.

Another accomplishment was the launch of the ADR practitioner-only webpage where providers can access their schedules, training materials, best practice guides, volunteer reports, and free continuing education opportunities. A lot of the information was based on recommendations from judges on what a practitioner needs to be prepared the day of trial. An ADR programs volunteer recognition event was held in July where six 1-hour continuing education sessions were provided at no cost. Topics included distinguishing legal information from legal advice as a neutral, working effectively with attorneys in the ADR process, effective language, and access in Maryland courts. Standards of conduct were also reviewed, and a 2-hour training was provided on the impact of culture and communication in negotiations. Several members of the subcommittee were present along with Justice Fader, Judge Morrissey, Nancy Faulkner, and Roberta Warnken.

Last year, the District Court ADR office received over 3,000 calls on a number of issues. When a trend occurs on a specific issue, Ms. Denihan explained they will contact the judges on the subcommittee to discuss solutions. Individuals can also use the online ADR request form and a staff member will follow up with resources that are available.

The Appellate Court's ADR Division provided service for 119 cases in FY23, with 50% resulting in a settlement agreement. An informal ADR workgroup began meeting in early 2023 to discuss internal processes and ways in which ADR services could be expanded. Most notably, the workgroup helped implement pre-hearing conferences. Judge Carrión asked for more information on the conferences and Chief Judge E. Greg Wells explained it is a way to determine which cases might be more appropriate for settlement. The parties are presented with potential outcomes and given the opportunity to mediate, which often proves to be the best solution.

Judge Morrissey asked Ms. Denihan to expand on the collaboration between her office and the self-help centers. Ms. Denihan explained that 39% of the call volume to her office are individuals looking for legal advice, and the callers are referred to the Maryland Court Help Centers. The ADR staff regularly meets with supervising attorneys at various help centers to keep them updated and informed of changes. The District Court ADR Subcommittee also works closely with help center staff to review documents and forms, such as the Case Disposition Information Sheet.

c. Major Projects Committee

Judy Rupp, co-chair of the Major Projects Committee (MPC), stated the purpose of the committee is to address policy-related matters regarding implementation and the ongoing operations of new and existing technology projects. She stated the committee members are diverse and well-balanced and she is impressed by the number of issues that are handled. The committee meets bi-weekly and works closely with the Court Technology Committee and JIS on long-term projects and incoming requests. Judge Alan Wilner is also often involved when agenda items intersect with the Rules Committee. Judge Morrissey, co-chair of MPC, added that JIS recently presented two different programs at a nationwide Court Technology Conference and congratulated them for being nationally recognized.

Further, Judge Morrissey indicated that the implementation of MDEC has been the largest project overseen by the committee. Prince George's County went live in October 2022 and the final rollout will be in the largest and most complicated jurisdiction, Baltimore City. There are seven different facilities and double the number of personnel than any other county. Judge Morrissey stated they are working closely with the sheriff's office and IT department for a smooth transition of multiple different systems, with an anticipated go-live date of May 6, 2024. An updated version of MDEC will also be issued in early 2024. The vendor oversees systems in 30 states and any time a request is made the update becomes available to everyone.

Looking ahead, the committee will be focusing on interoperability with our justice partners and encouraging them to electronically communicate with the courts rather than using paper. Text messaging is another tool that began prior to COVID, but has been limited to criminal cases. Individuals typically go to the commissioner to sign up and receive a reminder 7 days prior to the court date and, again, 2 days prior. Now, a party in a case can also go to the Clerk's Office to sign up for text message alerts. The committee is exploring ways to expand the capability to other case types, specifically in civil cases.

The MPC also reviews all bulk data requests regarding whether they are authorized by statute or rule and ensures the data is delivered timely. The committee works with a program called DataDome, however, issues have come up and a request to stop screen scraping has been made. Recent legislation blocked any reference to cannabis on a public website, which hinders the program's ability to search for those cases.

Judge Morrissey continued with the expansion of E-Tix, which began its use by the Maryland State Police in 2007. The system is used in almost all jurisdictions and allows traffic cases to be filed electronically. The MPC is working with JIS and the Department of Natural Resources to enable E-Tix capability for their citations, which should be launched by the end of the year.

The MPC also monitors the Rules updates to ensure changes are programmed correctly and timely into all aspects of the court system, including forms. The most recent update came from the 217th report regarding the broadcast ban. The committee is working with courts statewide to ensure programs and forms are changed and provide support for Clerks/Court Administrators.

Finally, Judge Morrissey explained that redaction software was purchased to assist with partial expungements required by the legislation passed for cannabis. There is a dedicated team in the final stages of testing the system among groups across the state. The redaction software has artificial intelligence that learns as it goes and is expected to launch by the end of the year. There will be a lot of human intervention to ensure accuracy in the beginning, but the goal is to eventually decrease the workload for clerks. Once the cannabis phase of the software is accomplished, Judge Morrissey added they will explore additional capabilities to further assist clerks.

Ms. Rupp continued with the work of the MPC's two subcommittees and five workgroups. The MDEC Advisory Subcommittee consists of members from the most recent go-live and the court next scheduled to go-live to collaborate and share experiences. She explained how helpful it was in Montgomery County to have the knowledge and wisdom from Baltimore County and to later be able to pass the baton to Prince George's County. Currently, the subcommittee has leadership from Prince George's County, Baltimore City, District Court Headquarters, AOC, including JIS, and members of Tyler Technologies. The meetings consist of project planning, task implementation, timelines, progress, risks, pro-active solutions, and more.

The Data Governance Subcommittee was formed to create a centralized structure for policies regarding our data and for all courts to unite into one system. Since October 2022, five workgroups were initiated. The Scope of Data Workgroup, which is now sunset, involved a consultant who reviewed the NODS standards and how to map our data to the national data, and to architect the data that needs to be extracted from MDEC. The Data Access Workgroup is also sunset but reviewed rules to ensure there is sufficient support to provide certain record requests. This workgroup also implemented the use of DataDome, which allows flexibility in tracking bots and screen scraping.

The Data Usage Workgroup focused on three initiatives including bulk data requests, a data dashboard, and data request forms. The goal was to create consistency in policies and procedures for those involved. The National Open Court Data Elements (NODS) Workgroup, also sunset, mapped the MDEC data to national data for comparing and contrasting. There were seven case types, 14 categories, and 366 data elements used. After reviewing the map for misalignments, recommendations were presented to the MPC on how to navigate the issues. The Data Ownership and Retention Workgroup is tasked with formulating recommendations that govern ownership of Judiciary data, as well as the retention of data. The workgroup is in the process of transitioning to archive all electronic data in a data warehouse. Members are looking at current business processes, designing the structure of the data warehouse, and developing a team to implement the project.

Now that all courts will be on one system, another project of the subcommittee is to maintain consistency, quality, and transparency of our data as the information becomes more available to the public. A data dictionary is being developed where data within a field is used to inform future data requests. Responses will include the same language regardless of where the data is pulled from to ensure consistency.

Ms. Rupp continued by acknowledging the work of the Alternative Work Arrangements Feasibility (AWAF) Workgroup that was chaired by Nancy Faulkner. The members included a wide array of Judiciary staff such as appellate, circuit court, and District Court judges, court administrators, clerks and deputy clerks, as well as staff from the Appellate Court of Maryland, AOC, and District Court

headquarters. The workgroup developed a report for Justice Fader, which led to the expansion of telework this summer to 2 days per week and open to managers. There are currently 3,486 employees that qualify for the telework program, with 610 agreements in place thus far (17.5%). The number is likely higher as it does not include county-funded employees who participate in locally administered telework programs. Ms. Rupp encouraged those who have not already submitted their telework plans to do so as soon as possible.

The pace of rollout of expanded telework has been deliberate and allows for the time necessary to ensure its success. The Judicial College and JIS have provided a tremendous amount of support for staff as they transition to a telework environment, including webinars, tip sheets, and repurposing of some used equipment to be used at home. The AWAFF workgroup will reconvene after six months to review the victories and challenges experienced during the initial phase. Members will consider the various pilot programs being tested and will look at combining telework with alternative work schedules.

Under the guidance of the National Center for State Courts, the MPC recently selected a vendor for an online dispute resolution (ODR) system. It is the same vendor as CONNECT, so the Judiciary has experience working with them. The idea is for ODR to be offered in cases such as child support, small claims, and waiver hearings in traffic cases as a more convenient option than taking an entire day off work. Litigants can upload a video online or type what they would like to say, and it would be sent to MDEC as a task. Remote mediation would also be an option when utilizing ODR. The process is still being finalized, such as hearing logistics and ensuring it is recorded, but many of the processes are already in place and it is just a matter of integrating it with the ODR system. A full demonstration will be conducted at the end of the year and courts will be asked to pilot the program to help determine the gap between the needs of the courts and the services available.

Another initiative of the MPC is the Landlord/Tenant Bulk Filing Workgroup. MDEC is built for single filing cases, so bulk filing of failure to pay (FTP) rent cases is not available due to the volume that needs to be filed at once. The workgroup worked with the vendor to create a two-tier system; one for general members of the public to file a small handful of complaints at a time, and another for landlords who need to file tens to thousands of cases each month. Beginning in June 2022, the system has been piloted in Baltimore County, which historically has the largest number of FTP filings. For perspective, from January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023, over 14,000 complaints were filed in Baltimore County manually and over 34,000 were filed electronically. The pilot period has allowed trial and error prior to the next rollout in Prince George's County on November 1, 2023. The remaining jurisdictions will have electronic bulk filing capability beginning January 2024, with the exception of Baltimore City who will begin bulk filing once the jurisdiction goes live on MDEC in May 2024. Once everyone is on board, annual reports to the Department of Housing will be quicker with less potential for errors.

Judge Morrissey stated that the Appeals Workgroup was created to review the appeal process in MDEC and to make recommendations on changes to business processes. The workgroup is developing proposed language changes to Titles 8 and 20 of the Rules, updating the appeals manual, and recommending changes to MDEC. The workgroup also assisted the Judicial College with developing 11 different appeal QRG's.

Following a request for questions, Judge Hecker inquired whether thought has been given to alternative methods of jury service besides issuing a summons by mail. Despite the statutory

requirement, he added that it is increasingly more difficult to reach individuals by mail and courts are seeing a lot of returned mail. On a related note, some court notices require a publication, but newspapers are becoming less common. Judge Hecker suggested that the Court Technology and/or Major Projects Committee may wish to review the legislative and rules changes required in order to convert to electronic notification services. Judge Morrissey added that citations were altered years ago to include a phone number and email address, which are less likely to change than an individual's mailing address. Judge Carrión agreed and stated many cases grow stagnant due to not getting the jury returns required to move a case along. She added that it would be worth an in-depth study and partnership with the Rules Committee.

2. Consideration of the Creation of a Special Projects Committee

Justice Fader acknowledged the need for a more efficient method of communication and the difficulty in determining which committee would be best suited to lead the project. As such, he asked members of the Judicial Council to consider the creation of a new Special Projects Committee (SPC). Justice Fader explained that the committee would consist of the five members of the Executive Committee of the Judicial Council (the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Chief Judge of the Appellate Court, Chief Judge of District Court, Chair of the Conference of Circuit Judges, and the State Court Administrator). The committee would serve as a place to oversee time-limited projects that either do not fit naturally under any of the current committees or that might have a different orientation than some of the existing groups under the Judicial Council. The SPC would oversee four workgroups.

A five-year strategic plan began close to nine years ago and it is apparent that a new plan is overdue. The Strategic Plan & Development Workgroup would take the lead on developing this new plan. The Artificial Intelligence Workgroup would provide a holistic view of the opportunities and challenges faced with artificial intelligence capabilities. The Ad Hoc Business & Technology Workgroup would review the operation of complex litigation and centralize the processes. Finally, a Transparency & Access Workgroup would look at expanding transparency while maintaining confidentiality and improving access to data in a secure manner.

After no questions or comments were made, Judge Morrissey moved for the creation of the new Special Projects Committee. The motion was seconded, and no objections were made. Justice Fader accepted the recommendation and thanked everyone for their consideration.

3. For the Good of the Order

Justice Fader thanked everyone in attendance. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:16 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for November 15, 2023, beginning 9:30 a.m.