

COMMISSION ON CHILD CUSTODY DECISION-MAKING

MINUTES

Commission Meeting

September 12, 2013 ° 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Location: The Judiciary Education and Conference Center
2011 C/D Commerce Park Drive, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Commissioners in Attendance:

Honorable Cynthia Callahan, Chair
Honorable Shannon E. Avery
Wayne Beckles
Paul C. Berman
Delegate Kathleen M. Dumais
Senator Jennie M. Forehand
Michele R. Harris, Esq.
Dorothy J. Lennig, Esq.

David L. Levy, Esq.
Delegate Susan K. McComas
Carlton Munson, Ph.D., LCSW-C
Kathleen A. Nardella, Esq., LCSW-C
Laure Anne Ruth
Master Richard J. Sandy
Keith N. Schiszik, Esq.
Vernon E. Wallace, Jr.

Department of Family Administration Staff:

Connie Kratovil-Lavelle, Esq.
Christine Feddersen
Gerald Loiacono, Esq.
Adam Wheeler, Esq.

Public Attendance:

Philip Cronin, Maryland Psychiatric Society
LaSandra Diggs, Department of Juvenile Services
Sandie Horne, CASA
Eileen King, Child Justice, Inc.
Kelley O'Connor, Maryland Judiciary
Suzanne Pelz, Maryland Judiciary

Judge Cynthia Callahan opened the meeting at 6:08 p.m. She asked that each Commission member introduce him or herself. She gave opening remarks including a brief description of the Commission's purpose and tasks as set out in HB 687.

Commission Tasks

The Commission discussed that some tasks established in the authorizing legislation, HB 687 CH 633, Acts of 2013, cannot be accomplished without a substantial budget. The Committee addressed particularly Section (f)(19) which requires the Commission to:

gather quantitative and qualitative data on the total number of contested custody cases per jurisdiction, including whether the court awarded joint physical custody to the parties or primary physical custody to the mother or the father over a 2-year period[.]

Judge Callahan indicated that committees would be formed to address specific tasks enumerated within the statute. Committees will be comprised of Commission and non-Commission members. The tasks may include, but won't be limited to:

- Parenting issues.
- Court process.
- Neutralizing and standardizing language.
- Resolving Disputes outside the Court System.
- Judicial education.
- 3rd-Party Parenting issues.
- Statutes and case law on custody in Maryland.

It was noted that the Commission should always consider the impact of various proposals on self-represented litigants.

Other issues considered included:

- Caretakers and changing rules.
- Changing families.
- Gestational parents.
- Judicial education.
- Third Party Rights and Parenting Issues.
- Supervised visitation.

Public Hearings

The Committee discussed the scheduling and location of the public hearings required by HB 687. Judge Callahan noted that the Interim Report will likely be derived in part from information gained from public hearings. Public hearings are required to be held in:

- Baltimore City
- Harford County
- Prince George's County
- Western Maryland
- Eastern Shore

The Commission discussed potential issues with the public hearings including:

- Security
- Neutrality of space
- Physical Capacity, ADA compliance issues
- Adequacy of notice

Specific venues were discussed including:

- Baltimore City
 1. School of Social Work
 2. Baltimore City Community College, North Morse St. in Baltimore City
 3. District Court
- Prince George's Community Center suggested by Delegate Kathleen Dumais.
- Western Maryland, possibly in Hagerstown.

It was suggested that the public hearings be recorded. As the Commission is unfunded, it may not have the resources for a professional recording of each meeting.

It was decided that notice to public will be provided through posting on the General Assembly webpage and Judiciary's Department of Family Administration website, notice to the State Bar and local Bar Associations, and Commissioners were encourage to spread the word.

Staff will arrange for public hearings in designated areas. The schedule will be distributed to the Commissioners and others via email and website.

Future Meetings

The next meeting was not scheduled, as the Public Hearings must be completed in the Fall 2013, which takes priority at the moment.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8:05 p.m.