



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

Matthew Barrett
Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Administrators

Hon. Bibi M. Berry
Circuit Court for Montgomery County

Hon. Wayne A. Brooks
*District Court of Maryland
Howard County*

Hon. Yvette M. Bryant
Chair, Standing Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure

Hon. Debra J. Burch
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks

Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

Hon. Heather S. DeWees
Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks

Nancy Faulkner
Secretary, Deputy State Court Administrator

Maria Fields
*Administrative Clerk, District 8
Baltimore County*

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

Hon. Geoffrey G. Hengerer
*District Court of Maryland
Baltimore City*

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

Hon. Stacy A. Mayer
Circuit Court for Baltimore County

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

Hon. Harris P. Murphy
Circuit Court for Kent County

Kara Pollak
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Administrators

Judy Rupp
State Court Administrator

Rebecca Sloane
*Administrative Clerk, District 3
Cecil County*

Hon. Shaèm C. P. Spencer
*District Court of Maryland
Anne Arundel County*

Roberta Warnken
Chief Clerk, District Court of Maryland

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

MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL

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Meeting Minutes
January 29, 2025

Judicial Council Members Present:

Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair

Matthew Barrett

Hon. Bibi M. Berry

Hon. Yvette M. Bryant

Hon. Debra J. Burch

Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin

Hon. Heather S. DeWees

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Hon. Fred S. Hecker

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Hon. John P. Morrissey

Kara Pollak

Judy Rupp

Rebecca Sloane

Hon. Shaèm C.P. Spencer

Roberta Warnken

Hon. Greg E. Wells

Others Present:

Robert Bruchalski

Sharon Reed

Melissa Canada

Jason Thomas

Jeff Huddleston

Gillian Tonkin

Hon. Sherri D. Koch

Unique Wright

Amanda Miller

1. Welcome – **Hon. Matthew J. Fader**

Chief Justice Matthew J. Fader welcomed all attendees and reminded everyone that the meeting was being livestreamed. He thanked the new members for joining and emphasized that their input is highly valued. He encouraged robust discussions and questions, noting that these meetings work best when everyone engages actively. Justice Fader also noted a ceremony was held to honor Judge Alan M. Wilner, who served on the Rules Committee since 1974 and was instrumental in shaping the state's rules and procedures. His long tenure included 28 years as chair, which made a significant impact on the Judiciary.

2. Approval of Minutes of the November 13, 2024 meeting.

The minutes from the November 13, 2024 meeting were approved. The motion was made by Judge Shaem C.P. Spencer and seconded by Judge Geoffrey G. Hengerer. Justice Fader introduced a new format for meetings, beginning with an update from the five members of the executive team to provide more information from across the Judiciary.

3. Committee/Strategic Initiative Updates

a. **Executive Committee Updates**

- **Chief Justice Matthew J. Fader, Supreme Court of Maryland:**
Justice Fader discussed the recent ceremony honoring Judge Wilner's service, recognizing his exceptional contributions to the Judiciary and the Rules Committee. Justice Fader also highlighted that the legislation regarding courthouse security and the legacy of Judge Wilkinson is moving forward. He will be presenting to the Conference of Chief Justices about this topic.
- **Chief Judge E. Greg Wells, Appellate Court of Maryland:**
Judge Wells, Chief of the Appellate Court of Maryland, reported that their monthly conference had robust discussions about recently filed opinions. In 2024, there were 2,495 appeals filed, identical to 2023, and over 1,000 opinions were issued, with 250 reported. He emphasized that while the work is serious, it is also a collaborative and enjoyable environment.
- **Ms. Rupp – Administrative Office of the Courts:**
Ms. Rupp shared that the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) worked hard to establish the Office of Information Privacy (OIP) as part of the Wilkinson bill. She urged judicial officers to contact Mr. A.J. Monaco, who is in charge of assisting with shielding personal identifiable information (PII) from online and state databases. She also highlighted the collaboration with 14 outside agencies to investigate and manage threats to judicial officers.
- **Chief Judge John P. Morrissey, District Court of Maryland:**
Judge Morrissey shared that he recently toured Dorchester District Court with Justice Fader and discussed the history and judicial work in the area. He highlighted the importance of engaging with local communities to better understand their judicial needs.

b. **Court Technology Committee – Hon. Fred S. Hecker**

Judge Hecker reported that the Court Technology Committee meets six times a year to discuss and make recommendations on matters of importance to the Judiciary. One of the key achievements in 2024 was getting Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) fully up and running, improving access and efficiency. The committee also piloted kiosks in the Circuit Court for Howard County and the District Court in Baltimore County. These touch and voice-activated kiosks assist visitors in navigating the court system, answering FAQs, and offering services like docket check-ins and form completion. They are designed to support clerks and improve user experience, but not replace clerks.

Other updates included improvements to Case Search 2.0, a new Senior Judge scheduling app to improve case management, and the expansion of e-filing for landlord/tenant cases. A digital payment system was also introduced to replace in-person payments and integrate with MVA for payment

verification. Additionally, the committee is working on standardizing digital evidence platforms for easier access to body camera footage and other forms of digital evidence.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) remains a significant focus, with ongoing efforts to recommend rule changes and build a system to store and analyze data safely. Redaction algorithms are being tested to help streamline compliance with privacy laws.

Judge Wells raised concerns about the standardization of platforms for digital evidence, especially in appellate cases. Judge Hecker explained that the Court Technology Committee is working on a standardized system that will allow all digital evidence, such as videos, to be viewed on the same platform in court. Justice Fader raised a concern about the authenticity of digital evidence, particularly when it is AI-generated. Mr. Jason Thomas from the committee explained that there are high security precautions, and digital evidence will be uploaded to Odyssey for clerk review before being presented in court.

c. Judge Morrissey – District Court Chief Judge’s Committee Update:

Judge Morrissey updated the Council on the changes to the structure of the District Court Chief Judge’s Committee. The number of elected associate judges has been expanded to ensure better geographical representation. Upcoming discussions will include topics such as a litigation update by Assistant Attorney General Kevin Cox, policy updates, and a focus on security, especially in relation to bailiff staffing and courthouse security.

Since the last presentation to the Council, the committee met on a number of matters, including: Judicial Council, security, legislative, and budget updates; the Judiciary’s Strategic Plan; efforts to centralize records of spousal refusals, which had previously been maintained inconsistently across counties, and work to ensure better coordination with the State’s Attorneys’ Offices; and updates from each of the Districts. Additionally, the committee held its annual joint meeting with the Conference of Circuit Judges in September and addressed such joint topics as Maryland Department of Health contempt proceedings; cannabis pardons and warrants; and sign language interpreter licensing requirements. The last meeting of the year coincided with the Administrative Clerks meeting, so that both groups could attend the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) appreciation event the same day to honor those who do so much to support the ADR programs.

4. Security Subcommittee

Justice Fader shared that the internal Security Task Force made significant progress since its formation in July. The task force identified key security features to track and assess at facilities. Justice Fader proposed the creation of a permanent Security Subcommittee within the Special Projects Committee to continue this important work and prioritize security issues across the Judiciary. This committee will regularly review security concerns and ensure facilities maintain high security standards.

Judge Hengerer motioned for the creation of a security subcommittee, which was seconded by Judge Wells. With no objections, the motion passed.

5. For the Good of the Order

The meeting concluded with a reminder to stay for a group photo. Justice Fader thanked everyone for their service and leadership in advancing the mission of the Maryland Judicial Council.