

**Columbia County**  
**JUDICIARY COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**January 10, 2023**

*Notice: These minutes have not been approved by the Judiciary Committee and are subject to additions and/or corrections. They will be approved at next month's regularly scheduled committee meeting.*

**Present:** John A. Stevenson, Tess Carr, Jeffrey A. Leckwee, and Joe Harvestine  
**Excused Absence:** Eric J. Shimpach  
**Also Present:** Chris Polzer, Denise Brusveen, Judge Voigt, Judge Cross, Judge Hepler, Brenda Yaskal, Julie Kayartz, Joseph Ruf, III, and Jamie Henriksen

**I. Call to Order. Posting Compliance. Approve Agenda. Approve Minutes. Expenditure Reports.**

- 1) Meeting called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Vice Chair Stevenson.
- 2) Posting compliance was met per Open Meetings Law.
- 3) ***Motion was made by Harvestine to approve the agenda. Seconded by Leckwee. Motion carried.***
- 4) ***Motion was made by Leckwee to approve the previous meeting minutes from the regular Judiciary Committee Meeting on December 13, 2022. Seconded by Harvestine. Motion carried.***
- 5) **Public Input.** None.
- 6) **Chairman's Communications.** None.
- 7) **Expenditure Reports.** After a review of the expenditure reports for the Judges, Clerk of Courts, District Attorney's Office, Corporation Counsel Office, and Child Support Office, ***a motion was made by Harvestine to approve all of the expenditures. Seconded by Carr. Motion carried.***
- 8) **Next meeting date** will be Tuesday, February 14, 2023, at 8:30 a.m. in the Courthouse basement conference room.

**II. Judges:**

- **General Review of Department Activities.** General discussion of monthly activities provided by Judge Voigt. The Courts continue to work on the backlog from COVID-19 as well as processing new cases. The Judges expressed concern with the dwindling number of Public Defenders available along with the number of experienced Assistant District Attorneys (ADAs) in Columbia County. They discussed possibly reprioritizing the cases and having the younger, more inexperienced ADAs handle the easier to prosecute cases so the District Attorney can focus on the larger cases. There have been some improvements made to the gate to the secured area. The elevator is still nonoperational.

**III. Clerk of Courts:**

- **General Review of Department Activities.** General discussion of monthly activities provided by Clerk of Courts, Julie Kayartz. Kayartz said she was sworn in as the Clerk of Courts last week. Kayartz added that the current staff in the Clerk of Courts have been amazing through the transition. Kayartz appointed Katena Stilson, a current Deputy Clerk of Court, as her Chief Deputy. She added that the previous Deputy Register in Probate, Kristen Lemanczyk, was appointed as the new Register in Probate. Kayartz is proud of the current staff and is optimistic.

**IV. District Attorney:**

- **General Review of Department Activities.** General discussion of monthly activities provided by DA Brenda Yaskal. Yaskal discussed changes and challenges in the DA's Office operations due to COVID-19. Yaskal said she continues to struggle hiring ADAs, but Columbia County is not alone in this struggle, as it seems most of the State is in the same situation. Yaskal added that through all of this, her current employees have been rockstars. She has a new Victim Witness Coordinator starting soon, who has some Columbia County and Law Enforcement experience, so she felt he would be a great addition to her office.

**V. Corporation Counsel/Child Support Office:**

- **General Review of Department Activities.** General discussion of monthly activities for Corporation Counsel and Child Support provided by Corporation Counsel/HR Director Joseph Ruf, III. The Corporation Counsel Office and the Child Support Agency continue to be busy with Child Support hearings, Guardianship cases, zoning enforcement, and other County business.

*Motion was made by Carr to adjourn the meeting at 10:14 a.m. Seconded by Leckwee. Motion carried.*

Secretary of Record,



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Supervisor Tess Carr  
Committee Secretary

Recording Secretary,



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Jamie Henriksen  
HR Program Coordinator

cc: Judiciary Committee Members  
Chair Polzer  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair Brusveen  
Internet