

**VERMONT SUPREME COURT**  
**SPECIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON REMOTE HEARINGS**

Meeting Minutes – May 8, 2024

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Committee Chair Scott Griffith called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. via Teams. Members present included Cedric Baele, Julie Bronson, Amelia Darrow, Jim Dumont, Roger Garrity, Laura LaRosa, Erica Marthage, Marshal Pahl, Marcia Schels, Rick Swan, Judge Timothy Tomasi, Judge Helen Toor, Jessica Van Buren, and Maggie Villeneuve. Court Administrator’s Office staff members Andy Campbell and Sophie Conway were also present.

**I. Welcome and Approval of December 5, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Scott Griffith recognized Bennington County State’s Attorney Erica Marthage and the Judiciary’s Language Access Program Coordinator Sophie Conway as new attendees.

Scott called for a motion to accept the minutes of the December 10, 2021 meeting. Judge Toor requested an edit to Section II. c. of the minutes dealing with outstanding remote hearing operations. A motion was made and seconded and the minutes were accepted.

**II. New Business**

**a. Review of Draft Advisory Committee Memo**

Scott drew members’ attention to the draft Advisory Committee memo to Teri Corsones and Judge Zonay. Discussion followed. Jim Dumont suggested that the results of the committees’ surveys of attorneys and court users be included in the memo. Judge Toor suggested that the memo includes “highlights and lowlights” relating to remote hearing practice, and Amelia Darrow suggested that the memo include more specifics. Judge Tomasi agreed, noting the benefits of including the results of the planned follow-up survey in the memo.

Judge Toor noted that a system is needed to track how remote hearings are working. Scott reported that as limited-service staff the remaining Operations Assistants would be leaving at the end of June. Judge Tomasi discussed the need for systematic training for Judicial Assistants. Judge Toor suggested that the memo include recommendations and that a written handbook on Webex use be provided to staff. Andy Campbell and Rick Swan talked about the training, support, and materials that are provided to staff on Webex use.

Several other miscellaneous operational issues were raised, including the use of interpreters via Webex, and signature issues related to electronic filing.

Discussion followed regarding the draft follow-up user survey. Judge Toor suggested edits to several of the questions. Judge Tomasi raised the issue of including information about education and income level on the survey. Marshal Pahl suggested adding “Hispanic” to the list

of survey questions dealing with race and ethnicity. Scott spoke about marketing the survey to ensure broad responses.

**b. Discussion Regarding Committee Sunset (June 30, 2024)**

Scott indicated the Committee could request to have its charge and designation amended to allow it time to complete its work. Judge Tomasi, Jim Dumont, and Marshal Pahl agreed. Rick Swan noted the opportunity that the committee's work may have on the development of a vision within the Judiciary for remote hearing practice.

Referring to the draft committee memo, Scott noted the decrease in fully remote hearings relative to other hearing modes. Roger Garrity asked about possible causes of this. Judge Toor noted the judges' use of standing orders and expressed her preference for in-person hearings. She also noted the remote hearings allow for better attendance in some cases and that court staffing difficulties may contribute to the fact that remote hearings are being held in some situations. State's Attorney Marthage offered her perspective on in-person hearings and the impact on people who are detained or incarcerated.

**c. Other**

Scott asked members for their thoughts on whether an interim survey should be undertaken. A motion was made and seconded to request the Supreme Court to amend the charge and designation to allow the committee to complete its full follow up survey and that the survey be amended to include the edits discussed. The motion passed unanimously.

**III. Adjourn**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.

Submitted By:  
Scott Griffith  
Committee Chair