

**Minutes for the General Magistrate/ Child Support Hearing Officer Committee
of the Family Law Section of the Florida Bar
June 27, 2007**

Members Present: Jon Johnson, Chair; Joan Montagno, Vice Chair; Barbara Beilly, Secretary; Maria Keebler; Barbara Goiran; Susan Roux Keith; Marsha Weaver; Norberto Katz; Franklin Akel; John Carlin; Lee Schreiber; Susan Maulucci; Bill Grant; Harvey Baxter; Thomas Sasser;

I. Welcome and Call to Order: Meeting called to order by Chair, Jon Johnson at 9:05 am

II. Approval of Minutes from January 27, 2007 meeting: Motion by Norberto Katz and 2nd by Maria Keebler. Unanimously approved.

III. Introduction of Officers for 2007-2008:

Co-Chairs: Maria Keebler and John Montagno

Secretary: Barbara Goiran

IV. Old Business:

1. Benefits:

Chair, Jon Johnson advised the committee that the Trial Court Budget Committee (TCBC), Conference of Circuit Court Judges and the Governor's Amended Budget all approved/and/or included funds to support parity of salaries and designation as senior management for purposes of the FRS that would increase retirement level to 2.0. But, the legislature did not fund it.

2. F.S. 119:

No bill was filed during this last legislative session. EC does support the Bill but it is not a high lobbying priority for the Section. It was suggested that a possible idea is to contact the County and Circuit Judge's lobbyist and maybe they will support because it adds grandchildren for all categories protected. Jon requested Barbara Beilly to e-mail him a copy of the latest version of the Bill. She will do so and copy both Joan and Maria and Barbara Goiran.

3. Training Opportunities for GMs/CSHOs

Chair, Jon Johnson advised the group that GMs/CSHOs have been authorized to be a part of the Summer, 2008, Advanced Judicial Studies (AJS) program.

V. New Business:

1. Seminars/ Conferences

- a) There will not be a 2007 Unified Family Court Conference. There is one scheduled for 2008.
- b) The Florida Chapter of the Association of Family & Conciliation Courts will have a conference on 11/2-3/2007. They will fund 2 GMs from each circuit to attend.
- c) The Dependency Summit is 9/5-7/2007 in Orlando. 2000 people are expected.

2. Commentator

Patricia Alexander, Editor of the Commentator, requested Magistrate involvement in writing for the Commentator. She would accept articles or interviews can be done with a Magistrate. The 9/15 issue is a GM/Judges Issues issue. Upcoming issues involve Children's Issues, Attorneys Fees Issues and Domestic Violence Issues. Maria Keebler expressed interest regarding the GM/Judge's issue and Jon Johnson and Joan Montagno expressed interest regarding the Children's Issues issue. Maria will disseminate subjects to the GMs to solicit participation.

3. Florida Bar Annual/Midyear Meeting Fees

Barbara Beilly advised the group that the fees for the Annual Meeting are waived for the Judges and that when she inquired if that also applied to General Magistrates; she was advised that it did not. Others in the group confirmed that they too were told that it didn't and some were told that fees were waived and they attended on a fee waiver. Allyson Hughes, Chair of the Section advised the committee that she would look into this issue.

4. Family Law Section Website

If GMs/CSHOs are not listed on the Family Law Section Website, we should look into having that done. (Secretary editorial comment, please do not list our e-mail addresses on the website.)

5. Unified Family Court

It was addressed that with the continued focus on Unified Family Court and the common conception that it means 1 Family – 1 Judge that we must monitor how the Magistrates and Child Support Hearing Officers are integrated into the system. Questions: Where do the GMs/CSHOs fit in and What are the GMs/CSHOs doing within the system. It was suggested that 1 Judge doesn't necessarily mean 1 Judge, because Judges transfer out of the division. Also, it could mean 1 Family/1 Division and a Division could include a Judge and GM/CSHO. The contact persons at Office of State Court Administration (OSCA) on this issue may be Dana Dowling and Nathan Moon. Both Norberto Katz and Jon Johnson serve on committees or have contacts with committees/agencies who are addressing this issue. These include the Supreme Court Committee on Family and Children in the Court, the Supreme Court who is working on Unified Family Court Rules and the Big Bar Rules and Forms Committee. A Subcommittee was formed. Chair is Bill Grant and members are Norberto Katz and Jon Johnson. They will continue to monitor this issue and will keep this Committee advised. Tom Sasser also advised that he has some involvement and will keep the Subcommittee and Committee advised.

VI. Goals for 2007/2008: (not listed in any priority order)

1. GM Presentations

At the last meeting, Barbara Beilly suggested that the Committee may wish to create a traveling CLE seminar for the GMs/CSHOs of each county/circuit to present in their locations. This would help educate the bar and would help promote recognition of us. The topic would be about pointers and suggestions for practicing before the GMs/CSHOs. The Committee will continue to look into this.

2. Pension and Benefits Issue.

We will continue to keep this as a priority and monitor what can be done.

3. Commentator.

GMs/CSHOs will contribute to the Commentator.

4. F.S. 119

The Committee will continue to look for sponsors for a Bill to make the statute change.

5. Section Website.

We will endeavor to include a list of the GMs on the Section Website. (Secretary editorial comment, please do not list our e-mail addresses on the website.)

6. Unified Family Court

Subcommittee formed with Chair – Bill Grant and members Norberto Katz and Jon Johnson. The goal is to monitor the committees and agencies who may be addressing Unified Family Court to

assure that General Magistrates and Child Support Hearing Officers maintain their role within the system.

7. Mentor Program

Look into the idea of creating a Mentor Program for GMs. Justice Pariente sent an e-mail to Rob Jones regarding this idea. The Circuit Judges have a 4 hour course for Circuit Judges that teach them how to be Mentors. Judge Lisa Davidson is the guru on Mentor Training.

VII. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at: 10:15 a.m.