

AUDREY J. S. CARRIÓN  
CIRCUIT ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE  
EIGHTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
CHAIR  
(410) 396-5130



FRED S. HECKER  
CIRCUIT ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE  
FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
VICE-CHAIR  
(410) 386-2837

## Conference of Circuit Judges

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CENTER  
187 HARRY S. TRUMAN PARKWAY  
ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401

### Meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges

A meeting of the Conference of Circuit Judges was held Monday, January 22, 2024, via Zoom for Government, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

#### Members Present

Hon. Audrey J. S. Carrión, Chair  
Hon. Fred S. Hecker, Vice Chair

Hon. James A. Bonifant

~~Hon. Donine M. Carrington Martin~~

Hon. DaNeeka V. Cotton

Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin

Hon. Jeffrey S. Getty

Hon. Stephen H. Kehoe

~~Hon. Stacy A. Mayer~~

Stephanie Medina

~~Hon. Dana M. Middleton~~

Hon. Vicki M. Pauler

Hon. Richard J. Sandy

Hon. S. James Sarbanes

Hon. Brenda A. Sexton

Hon. Brian D. Shockley

Hon. Richard R. Trunnell

Hon. Kevin Tucker

#### Also Present:

Melissa Canada

Nancy Faulkner

Cynthia Jurrius

Lisa Mannisi

Hon. John S. Nugent

Kelley O'Connor

Alecia Parker

### 1. Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Judge Audrey J.S. Carrión opened with a reminder that the meeting was being livestreamed for the public to view. She welcomed members Kevin Tucker and Stephanie Medina as the new chairs of the Conference of Circuit Court Clerks and the Conference of Circuit Court Administrators, respectively.

Judge Carrión moved for approval of the meeting minutes from November 13, 2023. Judge Richard R. Trunnell noted one correction to be made regarding best practices for

courtroom security. The minutes indicate having one sheriff in the courtroom when the best practice is to have two sheriffs present. The minutes will be corrected. Judge Trunnell made a motion to approve the remaining minutes, with a second from Judge Stephen H. Kehoe. After hearing no objections, the amended minutes were approved.

## **2. ADR Roster Rules Revisions – *Hon. John S. Nugent and Cynthia Jurrius***

Judge John S. Nugent is chair of the ADR Committee and the ADR in the Maryland Rules Subcommittee and provided an update on proposed amendments to Title 17 of the Maryland Rules. Specifically, the amendments concern the establishment of a statewide ADR roster for mediation practitioners. The current process is confusing and requires practitioners to submit a separate application in each desired jurisdiction. The administrative judges are then tasked with qualifying and tracking those practitioners.

The new, centralized process will allow applicants to submit one application via the Judiciary's website. Staff from the Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) will determine whether the practitioner meets the requirements under Title 17 and add them to a court-approved roster. Once approved, MACRO will enter the individual into MDEC and track the continuing education requirements. MACRO will also forward a courtesy copy of the application to the administrative judge in each jurisdiction in which practitioner wishes to practice. The list of qualified practitioners will be available to the public. Whether a hearing is in person or remote, the process does not interfere with the court's discretion to remove or assign a specific practitioner to a case. Rather, the new process takes the task of qualifying the practitioners off the individual courts.

Judge Richard R. Trunnell expressed concern that some practitioners are more experienced in certain jurisdictions than others and a centralized list would force a judge to utilize someone who is unfamiliar with the court's particular practices. Cynthia Jurrius, Director of MACRO, clarified that a judge will not be obligated to use a qualified practitioner simply because they are on the roster. The practitioner can also indicate the jurisdiction(s) of preference, which typically includes those with which the practitioner is most familiar. Ms. Jurrius stated she would discuss the value of having experience in a particular jurisdiction at an upcoming ADR program managers meeting.

Another provision of the proposed rule allows the court to obtain a practitioner with a particular area of expertise, such as custody disputes. The Mediator Excellence program on the Judiciary's website provides practitioners with training and resources. In addition, if there are any concerns about a practitioner, please contact MACRO to discuss whether a practitioner should be removed for good cause.

Judge Carrión suggested the Conference vote on the proposed amendments, though it may not be necessary. Judge Jeffrey S. Getty moved for approval of the proposed

amendments to Title 17, followed by a second from Judge Yolanda L. Curtin. After hearing no objections, the proposed amendments were approved by the Conference.

### **3. Honoring Judge Andrew Wilkinson – *Hon. Fred S. Hecker***

In the previous meeting, members discussed ways for the Conference to honor the late Judge Andrew Wilkinson with a visual tribute located on the first floor at the Administrative Office of the Courts. Judge Fred S. Hecker indicated that the Conference was interested in a plaque and offered to draft the language and share with members for comments. Nancy Faulkner presented the idea internally at the Administrative Office of the Courts and received confirmation that the Judiciary would be able to cover the cost of a memorial plaque. Judge Vicki M. Pauler, who worked closely with Judge Wilkinson, asked that the wording of the plaque pay tribute to him as a person rather than focusing on his position as a judge. He was a father, husband, and son, and it is important to acknowledge him as such.

### **4. For the Good of the Order**

Following up on previous concerns regarding the number of sheriffs in the courtroom, Judge Trunnel reported that Anne Arundel County is making progress and had at least one sheriff in the courtroom earlier that week. Judge Trunnel indicated that the protocol is to have two, but that it is great that the concerns are being heard.

Judge Hecker stated a prototype for circuit court senior judge scheduling has been developed and JIS hopes to share a final product by spring. The idea is to utilize an online calendar where courts can submit needs and senior judges can indicate availability. There will be a drop-down menu for judges to select the types of cases they wish to hear, as well as preferred jurisdictions. If a judge is scheduled, they will no longer appear as available on those dates. The program will also be tied to GEARS for easier tracking of hours. Training will be provided for senior judges and court schedulers, and a demo will be scheduled for the Conference and for County Administrative Judges. Judge James Bonifant added that the workgroup is also working on best practices for administrative judges when a senior judge is assigned to their court.

Having no further items to discuss, the meeting ended at 10:10am. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 25, 2024, via Zoom for Government, beginning 9:30 a.m.