

Meeting Minutes
ATJ Commission Meeting & Retreat, June 7, 2024
ATJ In-Person (with video appearance option)

Location: New Mexico State Bar, 5121 Masthead St. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109

12:00 – 4:00 pm

In attendance:

Erin O’Connell (ATJ Co-Chair)
Aja Brooks (ATJ Commission)
Alex Flores (ATJ Commission)
Aaron Holloman (AOC)
Bella Zayani (NMLA)
Beth Wojahn (AOC)
Bette Fleishman (Pegasus Law)
Cheryl Thompson (Metro Court)
DeAnne Romero (2nd JDC)
Diana Dorn-Jones (USBC)
Doug Echols (ATJ Commission)
Gary Housepian (DRNM)
George Chandler
Heather Norfleet (NMEJI)
Hosanna Black
Jane Levy (2nd JDC)
Jeff Wechsler (ATJ Commission)
John Arango (CLS Commission)

John Greacen
Juan Abeyta (ATJ Commission)
Kasey Daniels (MMH)
Kip Bobroff (Laguna Pueblo)
Lori Thorton (NMSL)
Mary Smith (CLS Commission)
Mercedes Murphy (Chief Judge 7th JDC)
Michael Aragon (4th JDC)
Michael McGuire (SCLO)
Michelle Garcia (NMLA)
Natalie Meyers (LREP)
Norma Aniles (AOC)
Scott Cameron
Shannon Bacon (ATJ Commission)
Sonya Bellafant (NMLA)
Stephanie Wilson (NMSC)
Teague Gonzalez (ATJ Commission)
Torri Jacobus (AOC)
Twila Hoon Witz (AOC)
Verily Taylor (ATJ Commission)

Item 2: Minutes Approved from March 28, 2024

Juan Abeyta moved to approve the minutes, which Alex Flores and Judge Mercedes Murphy seconded. There were no objections. The minutes are approved.

Item 3: NM Kiosk Study Update (Erin O’Connell)

The ATJ Commission submitted a proposal for a kiosk study with the State Bar Grant Fund, and was awarded a grant to conduct the study. The grant is to conduct a New Mexico and nationwide assessment and survey of the current utilization of kiosks, or alternative public-facing community access points, and the feasibility and implementation of kiosks across New Mexico. The study will include utilization of and recognized best practices of legal kiosk access points, and is a project that dovetails with the ATJC’s current work in planning a legal public-access internet-portal website in New Mexico.

New Mexico currently has a number of kiosk-like devices that have different interfaces, capabilities, and functionality. Several kiosk efforts have been launched independently in New Mexico, including the deployment of CLARA on the New Mexico Court’s website, a limited number of free-standing self-represented litigant terminals across the State, and a small pilot program of “justice stations” in the Eleventh Judicial District, in the Four Corners area, that connects self-represented litigants to court hearings from remote locations. To date, there are no cohesive guidelines or processes that link all current efforts being deployed, or that connect to other current initiatives, and no study has been done in New Mexico to date to determine the full range and capabilities of kiosk systems being deployed around the country, and the feasibility of those systems here.

There will be a group convened within ATJ to review applications for the kiosk RFP. Alexander Smith with the Judicial Information Division is gathering information on the data, and will assist. Anyone who would like to be on the kiosk RFP review committee should contact Tesha, Twila, and/or Judge O’Connell.

In other news, Gary Housepian and Sonya Bellafant discussed exploring the feasibility of a Community Justice Worker (CJW) program. The proposal was to implement a pilot program utilizing the model reflected in the presentation by Frontline Justice and determine the feasibility of that model in New Mexico. This would have included training and the type of structure as reflected in the Frontline Justice presentation, and provide for Gary and Sonya to travel the State to develop relationships within our rural communities and assess rural-community needs, to evaluate the CJW pilot program, and to determine its success within NM.

Item 4: Regulatory Reform Committee update. Begin discussion and gathering input from ATJC community on the development of a Community Justice Worker (CJW) Program (Erin O’Connell)

Justice Bacon put together a Regulatory Reform (RR) Committee, and appointed Judge O’Connell Chair. The RR Committee consists of lawyers, judges, educators, librarians and others. Meetings have occurred for approximately 18 months, with the RR Committee having conducted a “listening tour” of other state programs over the course of the first year. The RR Committee has not turned to evaluating and developing a program in NM. The RR Committee is exploring the potential for the availability of two different paths/models in NM: A Community Justice Worker (CJW) model/path, and a Legal Paraprofessional (LP) path. The RR Committee will begin by discussing/exploring the model with ATJ Committee members, CLS providers, members of the Bar, and others. The idea is to gather thoughts and concerns on both programs. Option one arises from the CJW Alaska model; with this model, there is a certificate and minimal educational requirements, as Legal Aid supervises them. However, these CJWs do not get paid, they are trusted intermediaries paid by their employer in the healthcare or other fields and work as a CJW as part of their daily work, with supervision from Legal Aid. Option two is the LP model, which follows a more traditional path that will likely require certain educational requirements and testing, and allows for the LP to work independently and without attorney supervision. LPs programs around the country typically allow for work in limited areas, such as family law, debt and money due cases, and criminal first appearances; require education, testing, and licensure; and have oversight by a body similar to attorney oversight. Twila will email a link to the ATJ Community with a one- or two-page description of progress to date and/or what the RR Committee seeks re input/assistance from CLS providers on the two proposed programs.

Item 5: NM Forms Collaboration with National Center for State Courts (NCSC). Developments and discussion (Erin O’Connell)

The AOC has received funding from DFA to work on housing and other initiatives. One initiative is to review, develop, update and improve NM state court forms for plain-language usage and accessibility for members of the public, including those with language and reading limitations. The AOC, Judge O’Connell, Judge Levy, and the ATJ Rules and Forms Committee, and others will be working with NCSC on this project. For example, the NCSC will begin by evaluating and providing recommendations on NM’s eviction forms, domestic violence forms, and NM’s Self-Represented Litigant Guide, which was revised by the ATJ Rules and Forms Committee in 2023 and 2024. Focus will be on improving plain language and to make more user-friendly.

Item 6: New NM Courts (nmcourts.gov) website developments and discussion (Erin O’Connell)

The new website currently has access to justice issues, and DFA funding will be utilized to develop and improve the website for public self-help needs, including finding and using forms and connecting to resources and information within and outside of the judiciary. The AOC, Judge O’Connell, Judge Levy, as Chair of the

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judiciary's JTEC Committee, and others will work with the NCSC to develop and implement needed website improvements. Judge Levy, Tesha, or Twila may be contacted to discuss current issues or recommendations with the website while this review and development process is occurring. In other developments, the AOC is working with Judge O'Connell, Judge Levy, and others in the development of a statewide self-help center that was partially funded in the last legislative session. The AOC will be working to hire a person to direct and develop the statewide self-help center.

Item 7: Pro Bono Subgroup (Erin O'Connell & Twila Hoon)

In the works is to develop a better partnership with the Law School to educate and inform the student body about pro bono. Teague volunteered to join this subgroup. This group would help people who need help in rural areas. In addition, 1st-year law students will be sought to help put on legal fairs and clinics, and to engage in pro bono help.

Item 8: Report out by subcommittees: Community Integration (Juan Abeyta)

Juan Abeyta reported out on the Community Integration subcommittee and their continuation of the webinar community series, with a current focus on financial literacy and information

Other Business (Erin O'Connell)

The ATJ Commission has finalized the internet-portal stakeholder group to develop recommendations and prepare a report for the Supreme Court, with John Greacen & Juan Abeyta as co-chairs. The stakeholder group will conduct about 4 to 5 meetings and will report on findings moving forward. A formal invitation is being sent to proposed members of the stakeholder group within days, and a meeting schedule is being finalized at this time.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.