



Interpreter Commission Meeting
Friday, June 4, 2021
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Zoom Videoconference

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present:

Judge Mafé Rajul, Chair
Francis Adewale
Florence Adeyemi
Anita Ahumada
Judge Matthew Antush
Maria Luisa Gracia Camón
Kristi Cruz
Katrín Johnson
Diana Noman
Frankie Peters
Naoko Inoue Schatz
Fona Sugg
Donna Walker

AOC Staff:

Michelle Bellmer
Cynthia Delostrinos
Moriah Freed
Robert Lichtenberg
Sierra Rotakhina
James Wells

Guests Included:

Deborah O'Willow
Judge Josh Sundt
Adrian Arias
Elianita Zamora
Yasemin Alptekin
Yuka Matsudaira
Eunyong Kim
Nicole Walker
Tram
Fabiola Tortajada
Yolanda Lopez
Chasete
Sarah Svinth
Grace Yi
Mario
Nancy Leveson
Yuka Matsudaira
Candace Larned
Chris Kunej
Tram Tran-Larson
Pablo Sepulveda
Emma Garkavi
Michael Zheleznyak
Jenny Tupper
Maria Lucas
Thei
K. Wells

CALL TO ORDER

- Meeting was called to order at 9:03 AM.
- Commission members introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

- Minutes were adopted as presented.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Letter Concerning Interpreting in Jails

- Judge Rajul sent the letter to presiding judges and the Court Recovery Task Force chairs and received a response on May 4th. The letter is included in the packet. It appears some progress is being made on the issue.

Gender Justice Study Report

- The Gender and Justice Commission is undertaking a multi-year study to determine the impact of gender bias on access to justice. Bob Lichtenberg and Kristi Cruz have been working with Sierra Rotakhina, the project manager, on the communication barriers section of the study.
- The study includes 29 subject areas, funded by a multi-year grant. The study has been a joint effort from legal experts and social scientists, focusing on Washington specific research when available.
- Kristi Cruz provided a summary of the content in the draft section. They are seeking feedback on the recommendations and barriers list. Bob Lichtenberg summarized the recommendations from the draft section.
- Judge Rajul emphasized the importance of open courts, not just for litigants but also the community. Interpreters are not provided for observers.

ACTION: Provide any final feedback on the communication barriers section no later than Monday, June 7, to Kristi Cruz and Bob Lichtenberg.

RCW 2.42 and RCW 2.43 Revisions

- The RCW 2.42 revisions were emailed out to Commission members as a supplemental document. Deborah O'Willow and Bob Lichtenberg have been working on the revision.
- Deborah O'Willow provided background information on the RCW 2.42 revision and recommended that a vote be postponed. She wants to postpone the proposal to ensure adequate feedback and a solid proposal is submitted. The submission deadline for proposed legislation to BJA is June 15 for 2022.
- The Commission expressed that they do not support rushing the submission.

MOTION: Motion to adopt Deborah O'Willow's recommendation to postpone the proposal of revised RCW 2.42 and RCW 2.43 was approved.

- Kristi Cruz abstained from the vote

MOTION: Motion for the Interpreter Commission to be involved in the revision drafting process of RCW 2.42 and RCW 2.43 was approved.

- Two revision workgroups were formed with the following participants:
 - RCW 2.42 - Deborah O'Willow, Donna Walker, Katrin Johnson, Anita Ahumada, Luisa Gracia
 - RCW 2.43 - Katrin Johnson, Luisa Gracia, Naoko Inoue Shatz, Diana Noman, Deborah O'Willow

Office of Equity "Look, Listen & Learn" Session

- The Office of Equity would like to schedule sessions with the 5 Commissions. Judge Rajul is proposing one interpreter, one attorney and one community representative attend the meeting on behalf of the Interpreter Commission.
 - Kristi Cruz, Anita Ahumada, Naoko Inoue Shatz, Luisa Gracia, Florence Adeyemi, Diana Noman, and Judge Rajul volunteered to attend.
- It was proposed that the Office of Equity present to the full Commission for an hour, instead of sending representatives. A separate meeting might need to be scheduled to meet with the Office of Equity due to time restrictions at the Commission meetings, and because the next Commission meeting is not until September.
- Members of the Commission will still meet with the Office of Equity in July – it will be a “special session.” Extending the invitation to interpreters and impacted court users should be explored because all Commission meetings are open to the public.
 - It was suggested that the scope of the first meeting with the Office of Equity be established before extending the invitation to court users.

ACTION: Cynthia Delostrinos will inquire what the Office of Equity is doing to get community input, and follow up with the Commission on the response.

ACTION: Cynthia Delostrinos will forward the Office of Equity meeting invitation to everyone on the Commission so that anyone on who is available may attend.

Interpreter Program Report: Testing and Recruitment

Testing Updates

- The written exam is now available year-round at testing centers across the state on a computer based format.
- The orientation training is currently moving to an online format and will be available on demand.
- Testing for some registered languages is moving online.

- Testing for certified languages is more stringent and could not be completed in the last year because of COVID. A testing date is tentatively scheduled for October 2021.
- An online ethics and protocol class will likely be held this September 2021.

Recruitment Updates

- Interpreter needs vary across the state.
- A large amount of Washington's interpreters are moving towards retirement.
- For recruitment, there are certain groups that can be targeted to help pass the court interpreter exams. These groups have shown skills and motivation in interpreting, and might need additional resources such as training.
- Potential partners have been identified to assist in recruiting people to the profession. These include government agencies, colleges, local courts, and others.

ACTION: James Wells proposed the formation of a workgroup to focus on interpreter recruitment. If interested in participating, email James Wells and Bob Lichtenberg.

2021 Legislative Session Update

5 bills were introduced this legislative session that affected interpreting:

- ESHB 1109, concerning victims of sexual assault.
 - Passed and Governor signed.
- HB 1072, concerning the use of civil legal aid funds.
 - Passed and Governor signed.
- SHB 1153, increasing language access in public schools.
 - Did not pass.
- 2SHB 1320, modernizing, harmonizing, and improving the efficacy and accessibility of laws concerning civil protection orders.
 - Passed and Governor signed.
- SB 5255, concerning language understanding of documents used in dissolution proceedings.
 - Did not pass.

BJA Court Recovery Task Force Update

- James Wells and Luisa Gracia presented to the BJA Court Recovery Task Force about the interpreter survey. This presentation will inform the decision making within the Committees.
- The Criminal Committee would like to know if the concern addressed in the letter re: interpreting in jails is still a concern now that the vaccine is widely available. Please direct feedback to Katrin Johnson.
- The Lessons Learned Committee will be drafting a report about COVID responses.

Racial Justice Consortium Update

- Naoko Inoue Shatz and Florence Adeyemi have been attending the Racial Justice Consortium meetings. They have also met with the group coordinator, Patty Lally, to discuss specific concerns and opportunity for collaboration.
- The group has emphasized the sharing of stories, inclusivity, and collaborative trainings.
- Florence Adeyemi proposed that new Commission members participate in an orientation when appointed. Bob Lichtenberg will work on beginning this practice in the fall.

COMMITTEE AND PARTNER REPORTS

Issues Committee

- The Issues Committee decided at their last meeting to bring a motion before the full Commission for a vote on whether to require letters of good standing for all reciprocity applicants.
 - **MOTION:** The Commission moves to require letters of good standing for all applicants seeking interpreter reciprocity in Washington. Approved.
- The Issues Committee formed two workgroups to review revisions to GR 11.3 and GR 11.4 One workgroup is recommending that no changes be made to GR 11.4.
- The Issues Committee has recommended the revision of GR 11.1 to include two new representatives, and to add a Co-Chair to the Commission. Justice Whitener has declined the Co-Chair position, and agrees with Judge Rajul that the Co-Chair should be an interpreter. The rule change language need to be finalized by the September meeting.
- Some Commission members expressed the need to examine the proportionality of representation as new members get added.

ACTION: Commission members should submit recommendations for the Co-Chair and the two new positions to Judge Rajul and Bob Lichtenberg.

Education Committee

- There have been 3 recent events sponsored by the Interpreter Commission that were well received. Training evaluations are included in the packet.
 - Judicial College Training
 - *Juries and Inclusive Justice* training for Superior Court Judges
 - *Interpreting in Challenging Times* – open to all court levels, two part training.
- Education strategic planning has begun to shift away from a reactive approach, and towards a proactive approach in anticipating education needs.

Disciplinary Committee

- The Disciplinary Committee reviewed requests for reinstatement from 4 interpreters. 3 interpreters were reinstated, and 1 has pending credit requirements.
- The Committee is reviewing the disciplinary process manual. Florence Adeyemi will be leading the revision efforts, along with assistance from Donna Walker, Luisa Gracia, Diana Noman and Anita Ahumada.

Liaison Reports

- **ODHH** – ODHH is still interested in participating in the Commission and is happy to be present and provide input.

AOC STAFF REPORTS

A written report will be submitted to reserve time for announcements.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ATJ Conference – *Crisis and Reckoning: A Call to Dismantle Unjust Systems*

- The conference will take place online, from August 11-13, 2021.
- Interpreters will be provided if needed.
- The conference is free, unless you are seeking CLE credits.
- Francis Adewale will see if CEUs are available for interpreters.

ACTION: Bob Lichtenberg will forward the ATJ Conference invitation via email to the Commission. Luisa Gracia will forward the invitation to NOTIS.

Nominations and Reappointments

- 4 members have terms ending soon, and 3 are planning to return.
- Fona Sugg will be leaving the Commission after serving 2 full terms. Ashley Callan, from Spokane County Superior Court, was nominated by AWSCA to serve on the Commission.
- Bob Lichtenberg is awaiting letters of reappointment for the 3 returning members.

Housing Justice Project Announcement

- The Housing Justice Project in King County is working with Florence Adeyemi and a colleague to do community outreach about housing and eviction resources. The application deadline is June 31 if you know anyone who needs housing assistance related to COVID.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 PM