

**Justice Action Group  
JAG Executive Committee**

**March 15, 2022**

**2:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

**Participants:** Justice Mead, Judge Rich, Michelle Draeger, Liz Stout, Susan Faunce, Charlie Dingman, and Karen Wolf.

**Via Telephone:** Victoria Powers

**I. Approval of Minutes** from November 15, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting. No additions/corrections noted. Minutes approved.

**II. Report from Chair - Justice Mead:**

a./b. Justice Mead offered a special welcome to soon-to-be Magistrate Judge Karen Frink Wolf and gave a fond goodbye on behalf of the JAG community to Magistrate Judge Rich (see item "I" below).

Justice Mead shared some historical materials relating to JAG's accomplishments through the years.

c. The pending project inventory was reviewed and updates noted. If any EC members have additional updates, please send them to Cindy.

d. The JB has updated its mask policy. Briefly stated, masks are optional except in small, enclosed areas where masks continue to be mandatory.

e. Justice Mead submitted a proposal to the Board of Overseers of the Bar for updating and improving the pro bono hours reporting sections of the annual attorney registration web pages. The new sections will facilitate the process for tabulating Katahdin Counsel recognitions. The most recent Katahdin Counsel figures reflect 11,607 hours of pro bono

services having been contributed by Maine lawyers to Maine's underserved populations.

f. Justice Mead reported briefly on the Access to Justice Income Tax Credit created by 36 MRS § 5219-YY which was enacted at the recent session of the Maine legislature. Section 5219-YY provides that the Supreme Judicial Court or its designee may certify up to five attorneys per year for five years to receive a \$6,000 credit on their personal income taxes if they relocate to underserved geographical areas and establish or join a law practice and satisfy several conditions including participation in MCILS and providing pro bono civil legal services.

As soon as the preparations for the program are complete, the court will issue an announcement and invitation for applications.

g. The court has approved directing a portion of Pro Hac Vice fees to the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund. This will require legislative approval. A bill will be submitted to the next session of the legislature.

h. Justice Mead gave an update on case management and e-filing. Problems and issues identified during the pilot project in Region V are being addressed, and plans are being made for a revised implementation schedule.

i. Justice Mead discussed the approximately half million-dollar ARPA fund grant that was approved for the providers. The process for actually receiving the funds involves some fairly extensive documentation before the release of the funds occurs. Justice Mead commended the providers and particularly Deirdre Smith for the efforts to complete the necessary forms. The paperwork has been submitted, and we hope to receive the funds soon.

j. A brief discussion of the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund ensued.

k. Justice Mead reported that the law school clinic will be opening an office in Aroostook County.

l. Justice Mead thanked Magistrate Judge John Rich for his dedication to the cause of civil legal services and his long and exceptional contributions to the Maine Justice Action group. The Executive Committee unanimously and enthusiastically endorsed a Resolution reflecting Magistrate Judge Rich's contribution that will be submitted to the JAG Board for a vote at its June meeting (attached).

**III. Vice Chair's Report and Pro Bono Committee Report - J. Rich:** Judge Rich commented that Liz Stout has been spectacular as co-chair and that Karen Wolf has also hit the ground running. He handed the report off to Liz and Karen who talked about the most recent pro bono committee meeting on March 14th. Karen felt it was very productive. The committee really focused on what their priorities are and tried to number those priorities to work on in 2022 and 2023. One key priority is rural access to justice. They want to have all their providers and stakeholders working together. It is number one on their agenda. It has a lot of different components to it. It includes pro bono efforts and improving pro bono reporting. They are hoping to have an actual action plan by next meeting regarding rural access to justice. They need to improve pro bono efforts. Karen feels once lawyers start doing pro bono work, they do not typically stop. Liz mentioned the in-house counsel committee that JAG had at one time. Liz also discussed a proposal to earn CLE credits for doing pro bono work. A rule change is being worked on. Justice Mead complimented them on their action plan. He thinks offering CLE credits for in-house counsel, who will need to self-study to do evictions etc., will be helpful to draw them in.

**IV. ACP Chair's Report - Victoria Powers:** Victoria thanked Judge Rich for all that he has done. The ACP looks forward to working with Karen Wolf when she becomes the Magistrate Judge in Portland. They continue to work on exploring ways to access justice in other states like Alaska and Michigan.



**V. Justice Systems Committee Report - Jaye Martin:** Justice Mead thanked the Justice Systems Committee for its report. The Committee meets regularly with the JB access team to discuss matters of mutual concern and has evolved as a highly effective communications conduit.

**VI. Executive Committee Organization Updates:**

- Courts: Justice Mead referenced his earlier comments.
- VLP: Liz Stout reported that all programs are running remotely. They received a grant and hired a half-time person. They are starting conversations as to when they can come back into the courthouses to do those clinics.
- MJF: Michelle reported on the MJF's support of LD 1326. The MJF continues to closely monitor the status IOLTA funds. They have noted a recent drop in interest rates. The Campaign for Justice is up and running. The Racial Justice Fund is about to enter its second grant round. The MJF has acquired software that will greatly facilitate grant funding processes and reviews.
- MSBA/Lawyers in Libraries: No representative from MSBA present.
- MTLA: Susan Faunce reported that MTLA representatives recently testified in favor of funding for civil legal services providers. Chief Justice Stanfill attended a recent MTLA meeting and updated the group on the court's progress on COVID related issues. The MTLA continues to work toward creative approaches to address the backlog of pending civil and criminal cases.

**VII. Legislative Committee Report - Charlie Dingman:** Charlie reported on ATJ Day at the legislature. Again, it has varied significantly from the pre-COVID years.

The presentation to the Judiciary Committee was virtual, but Justice Mead and the providers were able to present a compelling case for civil legal services generally and LD 1326, in particular. Charlie briefly discussed LD 1326 and thanked Michelle Draeger for her excellent article in the *Maine Bar Journal*.

**VIII. Other Business:** None.

**IX. 2021 JAG Executive Committee and Board meeting dates:**

**JAG Board (Feeney Conference Room - Cumberland County Courthouse):**

June 28, 2022 – 3:00 – Portland – Feeney Conference Room

Dec. 20, 2022 – 3:00 – Portland – Feeney Conference Room

**Executive Committee meeting dates:**

May 17, 2022 – 2:00 – Augusta – SJC Conf. Room

Sept. 19, 2022 - 2:00 – Augusta – SJC Conf. Room

Nov. 14, 2022 - 2:00 - Augusta – SJC Conf. Room

**Meeting adjourned at 3:23 p.m.**

## RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the membership of the Maine Justice Action Group wishes to recognize the substantial and meaningful contributions Magistrate Judge John Rich has made to the cause of equal access to justice during his many years of membership and service as Vice Chair of the Justice Action Group, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, the Maine Justice Action Group enters upon its historical record, its grateful appreciation for his dedication, guidance, inspiration, and commitment of substantial time and effort to the cause of securing for all Maine citizens greater access to justice under the laws, and in the courts, of the State of Maine and the United States of America.

DATED: June 28, 2022

**The Maine Justice Action Group**  
By its members:

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Hon. Andrew M. Mead  
Chair, Maine Justice Action Group

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Hon. Karen Frink Wolf  
Vice Chair, Maine Justice Action Group

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