

Minutes of Meeting
Court Assistance Program Changes
November 12, 2013
4:00 p.m.

The Kootenai County Board of Commissioners: Chairman Todd Tondee, Commissioner Dan Green and Commissioner Jai Nelson met to discuss the following agenda items. Also present were Court Assistance Officer Jay Sturgell, Trial Court Administrator Karlene Behringer, and Deputy Clerk Brandie Bradley.

A. Call to Order: Chairman Tondee called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

B. Introductions: There were no introductions made.

C. Changes to the Agenda: There were no changes made to the agenda.

D. Old Business: There was no old business discussed.

E. New Business:

Court Assistance Officer Jay Sturgell came before the Board to explain his role as the Court Assistance Officer for the five (5) northern counties. Mr. Sturgell explained to the Board that he primarily assists individuals with small claims and family law matters. Most of these patrons cannot afford legal representation. Mr. Sturgell has legal forms available for purchase and assists with document preparation and navigation through the legal system. Mr. Sturgell does not provide legal advice and does not represent any of the patrons that he sees.

Mr. Sturgell explained to the Board that he assisted 599 individuals during October, of which 68% were residents of Kootenai County. Mr. Sturgell advised that he often has a long waiting list, as it is necessary to work with each person individually during walk-in hours or by phone. Mr. Sturgell stated that it is difficult to meet the demand for these services, so he has found it necessary to find ways to improve his methods and procedures.

Mr. Sturgell advised the Board that he piloted a new program in Bonner County during the month of October, which was a great success. This new program was implemented in Kootenai County at the beginning of November and Mr. Sturgell wanted to make sure that the Board was informed of the new process. Mr. Sturgell will be conducting a workshop every Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. These workshops will include a PowerPoint presentation that covers the basics of document preparation and court processes. Mr. Sturgell will then have an open forum for questions and the remainder of the time will be spent providing one-on-one direction for individuals needing further assistance. Mr. Sturgell explained to the Board that he will schedule appointments during walk-in hours, for individuals that have attended his workshops and need additional help or that have been served with legal documents. Mr. Sturgell stated that he has made arrangements to have an attorney available every third (3rd) Thursday at the workshops to provide free legal advice.

Mr. Sturgell closed by informing the Board that, if the opportunity arises, he would welcome an assistant but that this new process allows him to assist more patrons at one time and focus on those that need more intensive assistance. It also provides flexibility in his schedule, allowing him to adjust the time he spends in each county based on the fluctuating needs of the public.

F. Staff Reports: There were no staff reports.

G. Public Comment: This section is reserved for citizens wishing to address the Board regarding a County related issue. There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

CLIFFORD T. HAYES, CLERK

BY: _____
Brandie Bradley, Deputy Clerk