

## DISTRICT/MUNICIPAL COURT LIAISON COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

On September 20, 2018 the committee had its regularly scheduled meeting.

Judge Frank Dacca of the Pierce County District Court introduced the District Court's new civil rules. The Court has decided to adopt the Washington State Civil Rules for Courts of Limited Jurisdiction relating to Rule 26, Discovery. Previously, the Pierce County District Court Local Civil rule 26 for Discovery were slightly more restrictive. The local rules only allow one set of interrogatories and the deposition of the parties. The State rules allow for two sets of interrogatories and two depositions without leave of the court. Although the more restrictive local rule has never been challenged by an appeal to a higher court, the adoption of the State rules will lead to less time spent by the court in motions by parties trying to gain additional discovery. Judge Dacca also spoke about the recent increase in the jurisdictional limit in District Court to \$100,000. He clarified the \$100,000 limit applied to each claimant. Judge Dacca informed the committee that there are civil matters that the District Court is not allowed to hear. Pursuant to RCW 3.66.030 the District Court cannot hear causes of actions involving title to real property; actions for the foreclosure of a mortgage or enforcement of a lien on real estate; actions for false imprisonment, libel, slander, malicious prosecution, criminal conversation, or seduction; and actions against an executor or administrator as such.

Pierce County District Court Administrator, Charles Ramey after 42 years of combined service to courts in California and Pierce County District Court announced his retirement as of April 27, 2018. Misty Robison has replaced Charles Ramey as Pierce County District Court Administrator. Ms. Robison came to the District Court by way of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and prior to that she worked in the AOC office in Utah. She is a Washington native and is excited for opportunity to work for the Pierce County District Court. Ms. Robison informed the committee of many impending changes in District Court. Room 839 has been renovated and now has a jury box and is available for trials. After years of sitting idle the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the County-City Building will be the site for three new court rooms for use by the District Court. The newly created Resource Center is in full operation and is currently located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Hess Building located across the street from the Court house. Although the County's future plans include tearing down the Hess Building, there are plans to renovate the 911 building and the Resource Center will be relocated to that structure once the renovations have been completed. The Resource Center has rotating service providers across a broad spectrum of needs. The Resource center will also be assisting in the areas of access to housing and access to mental health services. The Resource Center has a free clothing bank that accepts donations of clean clothing, coats and jackets, shoes and accessories such as back packs, purses and wallets.

Judge James Heller officially retired in April of this year after a career that spanned decades. Judge Heller served Pierce County District Court and the citizens of Pierce County with distinction and honor for many years.

As a result of Judge Heller's retirement, Pierce County District Court has had a new appointment to the bench, Lloyd Oakes. Judge Oakes was appointed to the Pierce County bench by the Pierce County Council in late April. His first assigned courts are infractions, and video bail returns. Judge Oakes did not draw an opponent in the election and will be unopposed on the November ballot.

Both Judge Margaret Ross and Judge Franklin Dacca announced that they will not be seeking another term as District Court judges and both will be retiring at the end of their term in January of 2019. As a result of their retirements, there will be two new Pierce County District Court judges starting in January of 2019. Lizanne Padula and Tim Lewis are running for the position vacated by Judge Dacca. Karl Williams and John Sheeran are vying for the position vacated by Judge Ross. In the Tacoma Municipal Court, Judge Elizabeth Verhey has announced her retirement at the end of her term. Dwayne Christopher and Derek Smith are vying for her vacant position.

Lizanne Padula and Dwayne Christopher attended the September 20<sup>th</sup> meeting and introduced themselves to the Committee.

In the previous meeting in May, Bryce Nelson, Pierce County Deputy Prosecutor, gave the committee an update on the Dart program. This program has increased its numbers dramatically. At the present time there are approximately 120 participants. The DART program continues to generate a great number of successful participants. Success in this program can be life changing for the participants and those individuals close to them.

Pierce County District Court now has the DART program and two therapeutic courts planned, Veterans' Court and Mental Health Court. The new Veterans' Court is scheduled to begin this April of 2019.

There has been a change in the way shoplifting cases can be processed by the County. The Pierce County Sheriff's office is training loss prevention officers to write reports and submit them directly to the Prosecutor's office through the South Sound 911 communication system. This will undoubtedly free up Deputies who have an immense geographical area to cover with a limited number of law enforcement officers.

Sheriff Paul Pastor reports that the Pierce County Sheriff's Office has brought on board Mental Health Co-Responders. The Sheriff is very pleased to have this resource available and hopes that more co-responders will be available in the future.

Pierce County Center for Dialog and Resolution is once again hosting the Annual Conflict Resolution Day Friend & Fundraiser breakfast at the Star Center, 3873 S 66th St, Tacoma,

Washington, 98409, on October 18, 2018. Everyone is encouraged to check the website for tickets and sponsorships. <https://centerforresolution.org/>

The Tacoma Police Department has created an outreach program comprised of 4 patrol officers. This team is tasked with engaging the homeless and establishing a rapport with them. In doing so they will be better equipped to assist them in finding resources in housing and mental health. Their presence will decrease the need for regular patrol officers to respond to calls involving this population wherein the officer has no knowledge of the unique characteristics of these individuals.

The District/Municipal Court Liaison Committee's next meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 29, 2018, 7:30 AM at the Harvester Restaurant located at 29 N Tacoma Avenue. All are welcome.