



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

1302 Pike Avenue, Suite C
North Little Rock, Arkansas 72114
Phone: (501) 682-3309 | Fax: (501) 534-3958
DOC.ARKANSAS.GOV

Criminal Justice Task Force on Offender Court Costs and Collections

Meeting Minutes Zoom - Virtual Meeting September 14, 2021

Attendees

1. Representative Robin Lundstrum
2. Senator Clarke Tucker
3. Judge Tommy Fowler
4. Senator Bob Ballinger
5. Ms. Lorie Mason Jordan
6. Sheriff John Montgomery
7. Mr. Benny Magness
8. Circuit Clerk Debbie Wise
9. Mr. Rick Stallings
10. Ms. Kristin Clark
11. Ms. Elizabeth Taylor
12. Ms. Robin White
13. Mr. Bob McMahan

Guests

1. Ms. Lindsay Wallace (DOC Chief of Staff)
2. Ralph Hudson (Director of Division of Labor)
3. Bridgett Clifft (Chief Clerk)
4. Ms. Cindy Murphy (DOC Communications)
5. Ms. Melissa Rangel (DOC Executive Assistant)
6. Bob Sanders (INA General Manager)

Members Absent

1. Judge Hamilton Singleton
2. Representative Keith Slape
3. Ms. Ateca Foreman

- I. Call to order by Representative Robin Lundstrum
- II. Motion to Approve Minutes from Meeting on July 19th, 2021: Judge Tommy Fowler stated that he mentioned to invite the District Clerks not Circuit Clerk on the last minutes of July. With this change, Tommy Fowler makes a motion to approve and Debbie Wise seconds the motion. Approved.
- III. Discussion of a Small Pilot Program
 - A. Mr. Ralph Hudson and Ms. Kristin Clark suggested starting small with a pilot program in the district court of Judge Tommy Fowler. Chief Clerk Bridgett Clifft was introduced to the group, and she presented the Internal CourtConnect (also known as Contexte) that is connected to INA. She showed the task force the fees and how they appear on Contexte. AOC does not charge courts to get on Contexte, but they may endure a \$2.50 charge for equipment cost that comes out of \$10.00 court fees.
 - B. We discussed the need for all Arkansas courts to use Contexte with regard to fee and cost accounting, as only a select few circuit courts do that now. This accounting system was described as being useful to the Legislative audit. However, Contexte needs improvement. Funding is an issue for this project, as it is currently being financed through existing funds and grant money, but legislators discussed finding a solution for the finances with Marty Sullivan.
 - C. Mr. Bob Sanders asked if we have the information that matches the types of offenders and their fees. He also asked how much of this information we have within the Department of Corrections (DOC) so that when offenders are released, they know exactly where and how to find the balance on the fees they owe.
 - D. The task force agreed that for the pilot to be successful, there needs to be a plan in place. Sen. Clarke Tucker noted three issues to be resolved:
 - a. The DOC and the courts all need to have access to Contexte,
 - b. Contexte needs to be updated and there needs to be a solid source of funding to do so, and
 - c. Separation of powers could become an issue.
 - E. Ms. Kristin Clark noted that this system would be useful to assist the turnover rate of employees within the courts because it would streamline the process of managing warrants, access ease, and would make processes more universal for different counties. She mentioned a concern of using bulk distribution of this system and an agreement with a private vendor.
 - F. Rep. Robin Lundstrum invited Mr. Bob Sanders to come back to the next taskforce meeting to compare the Criminal Collections system that is used by Sheriff John Montgomery with Contexte. She expressed that she would like to know the cost for all the courts to be on Contexte and what adapting this system would look like fiscally.
 - G. Sen. Bob Ballinger mentioned looking into COVID relief money as a potential source for funding the pilot program. Sen. Clarke Tucker mentioned he may have found a source that could help with the project, and he would find out more about the IT funding before the next meeting. Sheriff John Montgomery also mentioned his county does not have funding for an e-ticketing system and Ms. Kristin Clark indicated that State Police has this software and maybe they could provide the system to the 75 counties. All of the task force members agreed that there should be a discussion with the legislators about funding.

- IV. New 1048 Task Force page on the DOC website: Under Boards and Commissions on the DOC website, Ms. Cindy Murphy and her communications team created the ACT 1048 Task Force tab. It includes the minutes, the names of committee member, and committee contact information. Rep. Robin Lundstrum thanked Ms. Cindy Murphy for this addition to the DOC website, and let the committee know that if there is anything that they would like added to please contact Cindy.

- V. Forming an ACT 1048 subcommittee
 - A. Sen. Clarke Tucker would like to create a subcommittee to study the existing fines and fees and report those findings back to the Task Force. A motion was made to approve the creation of this subcommittee by Ms. Debbie Wise and second by Sen. Bob Ballinger. The motion was approved.
 - B. The subcommittee will include Sen. Clarke Tucker, Ms. Debbie Wise, Ms. Kristin Clark, and Ms. Robin White.

- VI. Other Business
 - A. Ms. Melissa Rangel will send out action items to the entire committee and follow up with the newly formed subcommittee members to schedule a meeting for them.
 - B. The next taskforce meeting is TBA. A date conflict will be sent by DOC staff.

- VII. Meeting adjourned at 11:13am.