

MINUTES
BENCH BAR COMMITTEE
Monday, February 1, 2021
By C. Edward S. Mitchell, Chairman

Attendance

Participants were: Judge Butts, Judge McCoy, Judge Linhardt, Judge Tira, Brian Bluth, Bob Cronin, Skip Greevy, Jessica Harlow, Thomas Heap, Jennifer Heverly, Ed Mitchell, Cliff Rieders, Nicole Spring, Tom Waffenschmidt, Dave Wilk, Michele Frey.

Method: Because of the continued limitations on inside gatherings and the requirements for social distancing and masking due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the meeting was again conducted by conference call.

The judicial emergency in the 29th Judicial District has been extended through March 12, 2021. The provisions pertaining to court proceedings in Common Pleas and Magisterial District Courts and the offices of the Prothonotary and Clerk of Courts and Register and Recorder are contained in an Administrative Order dated January 27, 2021.

Jury trials have been suspended due to the increased numbers of positive cases being diagnosed in Lycoming County. The judges hope to be able to resume jury trials in April.

The possibility of conducting jury trials by Zoom was discussed. While the Court is not opposed to the suggestion, it is hoped that in-person jury trials, with appropriate safety measures, will be able to be resumed in April.

When jury trials are resumed, they will be scheduled based upon the order in which they have been placed on the lists for jury trial with the older cases being scheduled before the newer cases.

Judge Tira's law clerk is cross training in civil case scheduling.

Access to the offices of the Prothonotary and Clerk of Courts and Register and Recorder is by appointment only. This includes access to the attorney's mailboxes in each office.

While the Administrative Order provides that orders of court are to be mailed to attorneys, Prothonotary Heaps advised that he is using a combination of mailing, distributing through courthouse mailbox and telephone calls. Because of the lengthy delays in mail delivery, he is using other methods of notification so that attorneys can learn of deadlines more promptly.

Judge Linhardt and other judges are attempting to email copies of orders from their offices directly to counsel in addition to the use of courthouse mail for local attorneys and regular mail for out of county attorneys.

The eviction moratorium has been extended to March 31, 2021. There is legislation in process pertaining to rent assistance.

The Resolutions Committee for Joe Rider has been appointed. His memorial service will be scheduled and conducted by Zoom. Resolutions Committees for other members of the bar who passed during 2020 are being selected.

The book commemorating 150 years of the LLA has been published. Copies were distributed to those members who attended the unveiling of the portrait of Judge Tira. Copies will be distributed to other members at future LLA events.

The next meeting will be Monday, May 3, 2021 at noon.

Respectfully submitted,

C. Edward S. Mitchell
Chairman