

MINUTES
BENCH BAR COMMITTEE
Monday, February 3, 2020
By C. Edward S. Mitchell, Chairman

Attendance

Present were: Judge Lovecchio, Judge McCoy, Judge Linhardt, Robert Cronin, Bob Elion, Michele Frey, Ryan Gardner, Jessica Harlow, Tom Heaps, Jen Heverly, Brad Hillman, Angela Lovecchio, Ed Mitchell, Joe Rider, Cliff Rieders, Nicole Spring, Ryan Tira, Jeff Yates

Old Business

Family Court Local Rules

Local Rule 1915.13-1 and 1915.13-2, relating to *ex parte* emergency custody procedure, have been rescinded because they are no longer necessary due to amendments to the statewide custody rules. Lycoming County will now operate in line with the statewide rules relating to emergency custody.

Administrative Order for Payment of Probation Officers

The problem has been resolved. Progress is being made toward improvement in relations between the Commissioners and the Court.

Criminal Court Backlog

During the last term there was disposition of 70 pending criminal cases. The backlog is disappearing. More time is being scheduled for guilty pleas.

New Business

Civil Court Scheduling

A noon meeting of the Civil Bar is scheduled for Wednesday, February 5, 2020. The main topic will be scheduling.

District Attorney's Office

The District Attorney's office has been reorganized. One Assistant DA position has been eliminated. An additional investigator has been added. Effort is being made to promote communication with criminal defense attorneys in an effort to resolve more cases before trial.

Gas Law

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has recently issued an opinion on the application of the Rule of Capture to gas released by fracking and captured by horizontal drilling.

Animal Cruelty

The Libre Bill, pertaining to punishment for conviction for animal cruelty, has gone into effect.

PFA

There was a lengthy discussion of the role of Wise Options as the gatekeeper for women filing Protection From Abuse actions. The discussion included restrictions on face to face conversations between parties in settlement negotiations prior to second PFA hearings.

Act 115 of 2019, Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI 2)

Act 115 of 2019 has gone into effect.

Prothonotary's Office

The Prothonotary discussed efforts to allow electronic filing. Electronic filing is expected to be available in criminal cases by April 15.

Additional software is necessary to allow electronic filing in civil cases. It is being pursued.

Fees, including nuisance fees, were discussed.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be May 4, 2020 at noon in the Law Association Executive Office.

Respectfully submitted,

C. Edward S. Mitchell
Chairman