Judicial Assessment Committee
2014 Annual Report

Prepared by Chris Burdick, SCCBA CEO & General Counsel

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Introduction

This is the first annual report for the Judicial Assessment Committee (JAC) appointed in 2014 to implement the Santa Clara County Bar Association (SCCBA) Judicial Assessment Policy & Procedures (JAPP). This report is required per Section D. of the JAPP.

Background

The Santa Clara County Bar Association (“SCCBA”) has long enjoyed a close and productive relationship with our local state and federal judges. Steve Haley, 2013 SCCBA President, at the direction of the Board of Trustees appointed an Ad Hoc Judicial Evaluation Committee (“Committee”), The Committee was charged with providing: 1) a meaningful assessment mechanism for attorneys in a useful format; and 2) a confidential and widely-available method of delivering attorney concerns to the Judiciary that does not interfere with the first goal. As a result of the Committee’s efforts, the Board of Trustees at their regular meeting on September 26, 2013, unanimously adopted the JAPP for providing a means by which attorneys can provide feedback and concerns regarding the judiciary as a whole in Santa Clara County as well as individual judges.

Judicial Assessment Committee

The JAC consists of the President of the SCCBA, the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court and the Assistant Presiding Judge or another Judicial Officer appointed at the discretion of the Presiding Judge, the SCCBA’s Chief Executive Officer and four attorney members to be appointed by the SCCBA President in consultation with the Presiding Judge. The appointed attorney members of the JAC shall serve for staggered two year terms; i.e., two appointed positions to expire in even-numbered years, and two appointed positions to expire in odd-numbered years. Two attorneys appointed to the initial JAC shall serve a one year term only and two shall serve a two year term.

The 2014 JAC included Dianne Sweeney, SCCBA President; Chris Burdick, SCCBA CEO & President; Hon. Brian Walsh, Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, Santa Clara County; Hon. Rise Pichon, Assistant Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, Santa Clara County; Nicole Isger (two year term); Melissa Kiniyocts (two year term); Kathryn Schlepphorst (one year term) and Vern Granneman (one year term).

Contents of the Report

Per the JAPP, the JAC shall prepare an annual report related to the confidential Judicial Assessment Form. The report will include: 1) the number of Forms received as “Informational Submissions”; 2) the number of Forms received as “Requests for Action”; and 3) the outcomes of Forms received as “Requests for Action.” The report should indicate whether any action was taken, and, if appropriate, provide a brief description of any action taken. The report shall not include any personal or identifying information pertaining to any participating attorney or judge.
JAC 2014 Activities

Number of Forms Received as “Information Submissions”: None.

Number of Forms Received as “Requests for Action”: One.

Outcome of Forms Received as “Requests for Action”: The one Request for Action received was reviewed by the JAC, including the Presiding Judge and Assistant Presiding Judge. JAC met with the attorney who filed the Request for Action with regard to a bench officer. With the consent of the filing attorney, the Presiding Judge and Assistant Presiding Judge addressed the concerns raised by the attorney and took all appropriate actions to resolve those concerns.

Conclusion

The JAC will be reconstituted in 2015. The JAC will address any procedural issues that may have arisen during the processing of the one Request for Action in 2014. The JAC will also address how to communicate the availability of the Judicial Assessment process to SCCBA members on a regular basis.

Any questions or feedback regarding any of the above can be addressed to Chris Burdick, SCCBA CEO & General Counsel, at 408-975-2121 or at chrisb@sccba.com.