

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
GEORGIA COURTS AUTOMATION COMMISSION  
Wyndham Vinings Hotel  
Overlook B Conference Room  
Atlanta, Georgia  
August 25, 2005**

**MEMBERS AND DESIGNEES PRESENT**

Chairman Judge Tim Pape, Juvenile Court of Floyd County  
Judge Charlie Mikell, Georgia Court of Appeals  
Judge Jackson Harris, Superior Court, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit  
Judge Sammy Ozburn, Superior Court, Alcovy Judicial Circuit  
Chief Judge Rucker Smith, Superior Court, Southwestern Judicial Circuit  
Judge Ken Van Horn, Probate Court of Chattahoochee County  
Judge Jerry Day, Chief Magistrate of Walker County  
Ms. Stephanie Finnie, Clerk of Covington Municipal Court, sitting for Judge David Strickland,  
Municipal Courts of Covington and Porterdale, Newton County  
Mr. David Ratley, Designee for Chief Justice Leah Sears

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS AND DESIGNEES PRESENT**

Ms. Rhonda Neal, GBI, Georgia Criminal Information Center Division

**STAFF AND VISITORS PRESENT**

Becky Alston, Administrative Office of the Courts  
Byron Branch, Administrative Office of the Court  
Jorge Basto, Administrative Office of the Courts  
Cynthia Clanton, Administrative Office of the Courts  
Vince Harris, Administrative Office of the Courts  
Debra Nesbit, Administrative Office of the Courts  
George Nolan, Georgia Courts Automation Commission  
Michele Williamson, Administrative Office of the Courts

**Introductory Remarks and Announcements**

Commission Chair Judge Timothy Pape welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

**Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Pape asked for any comments or corrections to the June 2005 minutes as presented. None were offered. Judge Day moved to except the minutes as presented. Judge Van Horn seconded. The motion carried.

**Status Report on Strategic Planning Facilitation Project**

Mr. Nolan reported on the scheduling progress of the Data Definition and Strategic Technology Planning Sessions of the six Judges Councils. Additional dates and facilities had been requested to provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate the workloads of the various court staff needed for these sessions. The available conference facilities list was expanded to include two

additional sites, Red Top Mountain State Park near Carterville and Brasstown Valley Resort near Young Harris.

As of that current date three sessions were scheduled. The Council of Juvenile Court Judges had scheduled their Data Definition Session for October and their Strategic Planning Session for December. The Council of Municipal Court Judges had scheduled their Data Definition Session for September. Mr. Nolan stated that he had spoken with Judge Mike Bracewell, President of the Council of Probate Court Judges, Judge Melinda Anderson, President of the Council of Magistrate Court Judges, and Judge John Salter, President of the Council of State Court Judges, during the meeting of the Judicial Council regarding the Strategic Planning Sessions. They were all provided with a copy of the scheduling calendar to assist them with scheduling sessions for their respective Councils. All agreed to speak with their Councils regarding scheduling, at a minimum, the Data Definition session for their groups. Judge Jackson Harris had acknowledged that the Council of Superior Court Judges was also prepared to address the scheduling of sessions for their group as well.

Mr. Nolan stated that the current planning calendar was showing available dates through December 2005 only but this had been expanded through the first quarter of 2006 to allow sufficient time to complete sessions for all of the Councils. He gave a brief explanation of the need for the sessions and the desired results for each session and stated that a more complete information packet would be provided to the various Councils explaining these expectations, one of which would be that all sessions require 2 ½ to 3 days of dedicated participant time to produce the desired results. Chairman Pape added that these sessions were needed in order to move forward with a statewide strategic technology plan as envisioned by the Supreme Court's Committee on Court Technology.

Chairman Pape stated that North Highland would facilitate these sessions via contract with the Commission and that the Commission would be paying the expenses for the participants who attend. All that would be required of the participants is that they show up and actively participate in the session. He said with a total of twelve sessions to schedule, it was extremely important that all classes of courts produce the same kind of product. Chairman Pape reminded the group that one half of these sessions needed to be completed by the end of calendar year 2005.

Mr. Vince Harris asked if three days would be needed for every session. Mr. Nolan replied that less time might be required after the facilitators have an opportunity to experience the first two sessions, but it would be all but impossible to determine if any time savings could be achieved until after those sessions had been completed.

Judge Jackson Harris asked if some estimate of cost had been determined for these sessions. Mr. Nolan said that \$25,000 had been estimated as the cost for each session. The contract for the facilitator had been agreed as \$20,000 per session and the cost of lodging and meals for the participants had been estimated at \$5000.

Mr. Ratley asked if it were possible to have the Council of Superior Court Judges assist the Commission with funding if GCAC ran low on expense funds. Judge Harris said he did not believe this would be possible.

### **Status Report on Traffic Court Software Certification Project**

A written report on progress was provided to the Commission by Columbus State University (CSU). This was the first monthly report on progress from Columbus State for this project since its initiation. The report provided information on the interns hired to assist with the project, the hardware purchased and installed to support it, and the current study of the national level GJXDM and GJXDD products to insure proper alignment of the program with these national level products, among other items of interest relative to this program.

The report also contained questions regarding policies, sanctions, etc. that will require interaction with the commission as the project moves forward. Judge Van Horn stated that CSU needed commission direction on how to approach standards regarding GAAP standards (Generally Accepted Accounting Practices), file archival and destruction / records retention schedules, and the introduction of Biometrics. A brief discussion occurred regarding the GAAP standards established by The Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board and the Records Retention Schedule for Traffic Citations, believed to be a 10 year retention before destruction could occur but requiring the docket to be kept for another 10 years beyond that date. The current 2005 standards established for the Traffic Court Software includes mapping to national GJXDM, the production of the required reports for the State, and proper handling of partial payments.

Judge Van Horn offered a motion to have the court software certification include GAAP standards in 2007 and Archival & Destruction standards and Biometrics standards in 2008. The motion received a second from Mr. Ratley. Judge Smith asked if the Biometrics standard was a requirement. Judge Van Horn replied that these standards were adopted when the Commission voted to accept the VertiWare work product. Mr. Ratley added that these standards had also been adopted at the National level. The motion carried unanimously.

Judge Van Van Horn continued by reporting that an August 30<sup>th</sup> meeting was planned with five software vendors offering software to the courts in Georgia: AOC IT, Harris, Icon, Criminal Justice Technologies, and CourtWare Solutions. This purpose of this meeting is to open a dialog with them about the good, the bad and the ugly of this certification plan. He said having the input of those most affected by this plan would improve its chances of success.

Some discussion took place among the members regarding the transfer of data to the Department of Driver Services, and regarding the Virtual Private Network vs. a Web model, which would be dependent upon “always available” local data.

Judge Van Horn concluded by saying that Columbus State University anticipated being ready to test vendor software by October 1, 2005 if there was software ready to be tested.

### **Operational Rules and Policies (Ethics Policy)**

Chairman Pape moved down to item eight on the agenda (Operational Rules and Policies) to begin discussion on the proposed change to Article 12 of the Rules of the Georgia Courts

Automation Commission. This proposed change would replace existing language with a more specific Conflict of Interest Policy in Article 12. During a brief recess AOC General Council Cynthia Clanton conferred with Chairman Pape and others regarding the proposed amendment. It was reported to the membership that Article 9 of the Rules requires a 10 day written notice to the members on any change to the Rules. Due to the late presentment of this change any vote on the proposed change would not be in compliance with that section of the Rules. The Chairman informed the members that the copy of the Conflict of Interest Policy provided to them at this meeting would serve as the 10 day notice and all comments regarding the policy should be directed to Cynthia Clanton. He also asked the members to come to the December 2005 meeting of the Commission prepared to discuss and vote on this policy.

### **Report on Technology Support from AOC**

AOC Assistant Director for Technology Jorge Basto provided the members with a written report on the automation support initiatives for the Commission. He spoke briefly about Rex McElrath's assistance with infrastructure and potential web uses for the Software Certification Program, James Johnson's service to the Commission assisting CSU with the Software Certification Project and sitting as a vendor representative during the vendor meetings, and Brian Collins' assistance to George Nolan with the creation of a new template based web site for GCAC that was initiated just two weeks ago.

Mr. Basto spoke briefly about some AOC Internal Support items, including Performance Management for Human Resources, Data Storage backup, Open Source options for Enterprise wide Applications, Super Voice Call Director, the Dashboard, which includes Customer Relationship Management, Asset Management, and Scorecard Metrics. Mr. Basto demonstrated the new Dashboard for the group, an internal management tool that will also be offered to the GCAC.

Chairman Pape asked about the CIO Council referenced in the written report provided to the Commission. Michele Williamson answered that it was organized to allow state agency IT management people to communicate direct one-on-one with each other on IT related issues. Mr. Basto informed the Commission that a meeting of the CIO Council was scheduled to be held in the AOC Atlanta Training Facility on September 9<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Pape explained that his interest was insuring that all are on the same page with these projects and there was no duplication of effort or conflict of interest occurring.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the origination and sharing of data between the courts and with state agencies, and the importance of open communication regarding all desired justice system improvements regardless of the originator.

Chairman Pape referred the members to their copy of the August 2005 Report to the Judicial Council as an additional resource of information on projects and activities of the Commission.

### **Review COSCA E-Everything Document**

Mr. Nolan referenced the *white paper* from COSCA (Council of State Court Administrators) and offered that the last two paragraphs of page one were an important read. He said there it reminded us that all final decisions regarding the courts, including those things electronic and

technical, should be decided on by judges, perhaps with assistance from a court administrator. Mr. Nolan said the report pointed out that with so much advancement in technology, the technologist of today can deliver just about any solution to any problem presented to them. The real question is whether or not a technical solution is needed and at what cost. Mr. Ratley reminded all in attendance that this report was a draft and that a final report could possibly be available within the next 90 days.

### **Review of Strategic Plan**

Chairman Pape asked the members to reference the Commission's Strategic Business Plan behind tab four in their manuals to begin a review of the priority items found there. He reminded the members that it was necessary for the Commission to review its current status in terms of where it should be according to the plan. The results of the review revealed that at the highest level *defining a framework for standards development* was moving along on target, the *collecting of benefits on information exchange for each stakeholder* had no activity as yet but would come from the planning sessions, and the *development and execution of a comprehensive communication plan related to benefits* needed the attention of the Commission.

Judge Smith made reference to a discussion from another meeting of the Commission regarding talking points on the Commission and its work and asked if it would be possible to develop an e-mail with information about the benefits of this work. He said there was a need to tell the stakeholders what we are doing for them. Judge Van Horn said that would take some time to develop. Judge Smith said we should make an attempt to give them what we have while we have it. Judge Van Horn provided as an example his sharing of what is possible with XML - the filing of a marriage license automatically generates a change to the Department of Driver Services for a new driver license, that automatically generates a change request to Social Security for a new SS card, etc., i.e. thinking outside the box.

Chairman Pape and Judge Smith emphasized that communication was always a critical factor, so critical that it was included as such on page eight of the Commission's Strategic Plan. Both urged all to be proactive with selling the Commission's message, especially to the legislature.

Ms. Debra Nesbit, AOC's Associate Director for Legislative and Governmental Affairs, was then introduced to the group. Ms. Nesbit provided the Commission with an update on local legislation initiatives for technology funding offered during the last session of the General Assembly and other technology funding attempts that occurred during that legislative session. She reminded the members that most State Court Clerks are also Superior Court Clerks and therefore have access to case management systems through the GSCCCA. A judge's funding request for "courtroom technology improvements" can be misunderstood by the legislature as a request for software and result in the request not being considered, even though it has nothing to do with the purchase of software. Ms. Nesbit made the members aware of some apparent misinformation making the rounds at the Capitol, that the courts were opposed to any changes to court fees. She said she was not aware of any judge that had spoken out in opposition to a flat percentage on court fees.

Additional discussion ensued regarding statewide technology fees, appropriate legislation, and appropriate application of these fees with general consensus that some method of funding court

offices in the rural areas of the state should be a priority. Judge Mikell questioned the need for any further discussion. Judge Smith called the question.

Chairman Pape then continued the review the Commission's Strategic Plan. He stated that one of the goals established by the Commission was to have six data exchanges within the next three years following the adoption of that plan. He said the Commission was one year along in the plan and no exchange of data had occurred. He also stated that the Commission was within one year of having statewide standards adopted by multiple classes of courts and this would place the Commission in a position to begin these data exchanges. During FY2007 the Commission should begin the data exchanges. Chairman Pape stated that budget funding for FY2007 would address the issue of data exchanges by and between courts and with state agencies.

The Chairman reported that the Court Software Certification Process was on track for Traffic Courts and now needed to be expanded to include the other classes of courts.

Chairman Pape said that one of the goals of the Commission was to educate the GCAC members about the projects it had undertaken and to keep them informed as to where these projects would lead them in the future. He said it was his desire to have something of educational value for the members at every meeting.

Chairman Pape reminded the Commission that one of its goals was to develop resourcing strategies to accomplish the day to day responsibilities of the Commission.

### **Budget Report**

Mr. Nolan reported that enough money remained in the budget at the close of FY2005 to allow the funding of the Data Definition Session for the Municipal Courts in lieu of having to fund this from the FY2006 budget.

Mr. Nolan reviewed the FY2006 budget with the Commission. Judge Van Horn questioned the \$66,000 for Administration. Mr. Nolan explained that a portion of the Executive Director's salary was included in this number. Judge Van Horn asked if the budget had been increased by the amount of money needed to cover this salary and benefits. He stated that the GCAC had given the AOC its entire IT personnel budget, including the salary for the Executive Director, when the GCAC IT team was transferred to the AOC. Now that Executive Director had been moved back to the GCAC, the salary should also be moved back to GCAC with him. Mr. Ratley said he wondered if the budget should have been increased to include the salary. Judge Van Horn pointed out that the combined salary and benefits for the Executive Director's position equaled almost one third of the Commission's entire operating budget.

Following additional conversation regarding clarification of this money being a continuation item because it is salary, Judge Van Horn made a motion to amend the FY2006 budget to include a continuation item equal to the amount of the salary plus benefits for the Commission's Executive Director and to add this continuation item into the FY2007 budget. Judge Mikell seconded the motion. Judge Smith asked whether it was more advantageous to carry the salary in the GCAC budget or the AOC budget. Mr. Ratley replied that it would be better long term to have it in the GCAC budget. The vote carried unanimously.

**Next Meeting**

Chairman Pape set the next Executive Committee Meeting for Wednesday afternoon December 7, 2005 and the next Business Meeting for Thursday December 8, 2005. Both these meeting coincide with the next meeting of the Judicial Council in Atlanta.

**Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded and passed unanimously.

The above and foregoing minutes were approved at the meeting of the Georgia Courts Automation Commission held on \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2005.

Respectfully submitted:

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Judge R. Rucker Smith  
Secretary

**Georgia Courts Automation Commission**  
*Business Meeting*  
*Thursday August 25, 2005*  
*9:00 PM –12:00 Noon*  
**Wyndham Vinings Hotel**  
**Overlook B Conference Room**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**

**Agenda**

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|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Introductions and Opening Remarks                        | Chairman Pape                    |
| 2. Approval of June 2005 Minutes                            | Chairman Pape                    |
| 3. Status Report on Strategic Planning Facilitation Project | George Nolan                     |
| 4. Status Report on Traffic Court Certification Project     | Judge Van Horn /<br>George Nolan |
| 5. Budget Report  | George Nolan                     |
| 6. Review of Strategic Plan                                 | Chairman Pape                    |
| 7. Report on Technology Support from AOC                    | George Nolan /<br>Jorge Basto    |
| 8. Operational Rules and Policies<br>a. Ethics Policy       | Chairman Pape                    |
| 9. Review COSCA E-Everything Document                       | George Nolan                     |
| 10. Review of GCAC / AOC Memorandum Of Understanding        | Chairman Pape                    |