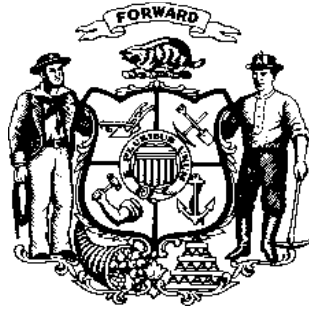




Wisconsin Judicial Council

William Gleisner, III, Chair
Margo Kirchner, Vice-Chair

MINUTES

Wisconsin Judicial Council Committee on Municipal Court Interpreters

June 2, 2026. 12:00 P.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Chair Hon. Kristine Snow, Ruby De Leon, Hon. Molly Gena, Hon. Jason Hanson, Hon. Margo Kirchner, Susan Lund, Fatima Malik, R. Timothy Muth, Ann Olson, Nora Platt, Hon. Kevin Rathburn, Ryan Sendelbach, Dawn Wilcox (departs at 12:30pm)

Members Excused: Hon. Jim Gramling

I. Introductions and Roll Call

Judge Snow called the meeting to order at 12:02 PM. Committee members were identified and quorum was established. Ms. Wilcox left the meeting at approximately 12:30 pm but quorum continued.

II. Review and approval of April meeting minutes

Judge Kirchner moves to approve the minutes. Judge Hanson seconds. There are no objections. The April minutes are approved.

III. Update from Attorney Zibolski on interpreter requirements and practice in similar Midwest states

Attorney Zibolski presents a comparison of five Midwest states and their municipal court interpreter requirements. Attorney Zibolski indicates that other states have a series of options for interpreter appointments and some assess fees against litigants for the cost of interpreters. Committee members discuss the findings.

Attorney Lund explains that she would recommend against shifting costs to litigants, as there are serious consequences for burdening litigants with additional debt. Judge Hanson advises that this could be a consideration in certain instances if gameplay or failure to appear occurs, as municipal courts have limited tools compared to circuit courts. Judge Kircher points out there may be an Attorney General Opinion that precludes passing interpreter costs down to litigants, including municipal courts. Ms. Olson shares a copy of the opinion:

https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/oag/recent/oag9_08. The opinion indicates the same. There is general consensus that making interpreters mandatory but laying costs on litigants would not be recommended.

IV. Discussion with committee members to narrow issue areas and create short term committee goals

Judge Snow clarifies three primary goals of the committee and questions to answer:

Should there be fee shifting?

What types of interpreters should be utilized (acknowledging the stress on interpreter resources for the circuit court)?

What types of proceedings should interpreters be recommended/required for?

Judge Kirchner suggests we look at the survey from the State Courts office and the common types of interpreters being used. Then suggested the committee parse out the methods of interpretation we should not use. She added that this should also include discussion of AI and other technology. Attorney Zibolski can provide some examples from other states. Judge Hanson points out a concern that there may be a disconnect between the current statute and ADA requirements, and that we must remain cognizant of realistic funding mechanisms.

Attorney Muth points out that the survey is somewhat incomplete as largest municipalities are missing, including Milwaukee, Eau Claire, and Madison. He also points out that many of the reported interpreters used by courts are inconsistent with the recommendations of the bench card. Judge Gena offers to follow up on Milwaukee, and believed they were working on it. Ms. Olson indicated that they partnered with judges for communication on the survey but there was no mandate to complete it. She volunteered to reopen the survey so more data could be gathered from the missing municipalities.

V. Updates from committee members on research suggestions, expertise, and recommended next steps

Judge Snow and Attorney Zibolski will continue to discuss the three areas of goal focus, including gathering more information not captured in the survey. There was general consensus that there should be discussion of the new law increasing potential revenue to municipalities and how it could be used for interpreter fees on the next agenda.

VI. Adjournment

Judge Hanson moves to adjourn, Ms. Olson seconds. No nays. Meeting adjourned at 12:54pm.

Notes by Attorney Zibolski