

MCCGJA Year in Review -2015-2016

When the Board of Directors took office in July, we had no idea what was in store for us. Looking through the minutes over the last 11 months, I found a few items to highlight.

We completed the training for the 2015-2016 Grand Jury. Catherine McGowan had told us this would be her last year as the Training Chair. She had been in charge of the Training for at least 10 years. I believe the MCCGJA membership had just assumed that things would go on the same forever and had not really paid much attention as to how things ran. With the support of Betty Mattea, who pretty much handled the interviewing process, things ran very smoothly without much involvement of the members except for interviewing the applicants and acting as instructors for the training.

At our August meeting Catherine and Betty, along with guests Patti Church and Jeanne Michaels, reported changes to the screening process as Sacramento has mandated that court time be better spent: (1) The court will no longer interview applicants, (2) the presiding judge will choose 30 prospective jurors, (3) interviewers will be selected by the court. Betty presented a verbal history of the interviewing process and Catherine reported the timeline. It was questioned if the process was actually a function of our group - many were unclear. A lengthy discussion followed.

So it began...Sept.

The Judges proposed changes in the screening process. The major change is that the Judges would no longer interview the candidates but rely on the information provided in the interview process.

The Board approved a new committee called "Interviewing Committee". Betty Mattea was appointed Chair.

Many iterations of how we would handle the new duties were discussed. Since we would be taking on more responsibility, I wrote a letter to the Judge and County Counsel regarding the new process. The letter also requested that the County give the MCCGJA \$1,300 to support outreach and training. This request was later approved in December and helped with our recruitment effort.

October:

Betty Mattea suffered a stroke, which made it difficult for her to continue as the Chair of the Interviewing Committee.(IC) Tom Borden was asked to serve as the Chair of the new committee, with Betty as our advisor.

December:

- Interview Committee activities:
 1. Suggested Revisions to Judge's Letter to applicants.
 2. Revised Invitation to "new" interviewers
 3. Reviewed Explanation of the Group Activity
 4. Reviewed Revised Questions for Applicants

I explained, to the Board, that the interview committee, which is now tasked with doing all of the interviews (the Judge will no longer interview potential jurors), decided to shift the interview emphasis to more behavioral types of questions. The interview process has worked well to date, but the committee would like to bring the process up a notch. The Judge has never been on a jury and therefore does not understand the personality challenges on a jury. The approach being proposed (a combination of group activity and one-on-one interview), while more complex than before, should weed out people who are not comfortable in a group effort. The interview process is a work in progress. Some questions raised by the membership were "Do we have enough interviewers?" "Will interviewers be trained?" The committee is handling these aspects.

A motion was passed to send the documents for review and approval by County Counsel and the Judge.

January:

- IC Chair -Tom described the revised interview process for prospective Grand Jurors as follows: 25-30 minute group activity with interaction between interviewees; and 30 minute interviews with each interviewee based on behavioral questions focusing on life and career experiences. In addition, the questions were revised to include behavioral questions and were approved by the Judge.
- Training - Nadine proposed that Rich act as Interim Chair of the Committee through August. Rich developed a more interactive program to help engage the new jurors.
- Training Manual – Since the training Manual had not been revised since 2009, the Board approved revisions with Rich's initial re-organizing efforts a good start on it. Paul and Nadine collaborated with Rich and the final version was sent to printing in early June.

February

- The Interviewing Committee (The name of the committee was later changed to Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) so it would not be confused with the IRC)-

March -

Had a meeting with the Presiding Judge regarding the time and location of the interviews. The end result was that the interviews would be earlier in the day starting at 12:00 noon and would be conducted on the court floor rather than the cafeteria.

April

Outreach.

- Rich and Susan held two successful classes at College of Marin regarding the Civil Grand Jury and its importance to our communities.
- New interviewing procedures in place. Applicants liked the group exercise and that the interviews were on the court floor.

May – Jack Nixon volunteers to be President for the new MCCGJA year.

June. So here we are at the end of a very challenging year. I want to thank all the board and chairpersons for their hard work and support.

The IRC chairs Helen and Sarah with held from Tom, kept in good contact with the Continuity committee chair of the Grand Jury, Jay. The main goal this year was to ensure that going forward the two entities have different missions. And not have the IRC perceived as a “shadow jury”. The committee reviewed many responses and did keep administrators on their toes. Thank you team for all the effort you put into this committee.

Outreach- Jean handled the Senior Fair in October, had 5 open houses, and communicated via “Next Door” and newspaper ads. We would like to reach more people as we ended up with about 45 applicants, but some choose not to apply. The swearing in was on June 16th. The current level is 19 with 3 holdovers. So we have a full compliment of 19 with just 3 alternates. Thanks to Jean for all her hard work and the great Marin Voice article.

Membership- Owen - The committee exceeded all expectations with a total of 96 members, 53 of which are Life members. Job well done, Owen.

Communications- Gene keeps us on our toes by getting a monthly newsletter published and taking pictures of our events. Thanks Gene, for all your hard work keeping the communications open to all.

Treasurer- Peter- while not present today, I send my sincere thanks for remaining on board for a second term and for keeping us on an even keel and informed of our budget obligations.

SAC -Tom with help from Jean, and Rich, guided us through all the changes and attained a wonderful result. Thank you so much for taking on this major challenge and seeing it through to such success.

Training- Rich took the bull by the horns, reorganized, and updated our training manual, with some editorial collaboration from Paul and myself. Rich has also updated the training schedule to add more interaction with the jury members. Thanks so much for taking this on, Rich. We all greatly appreciated your hard work and thanks to Paul's eagle eye, catching a few items that needed some changes.

Social- Nancy- While Nancy was unable to attend today, I certainly will pass along my appreciation for her efforts setting up the picnic and providing her home for a lovely Christmas/Holiday party and for arranging our nice luncheons with guest speakers.

Once again, Thanks to all of you and your committee members for helping with this very complex year. I leave my position as President knowing that we will pass on to the new officers and committees the wisdom learned and offer our help as needed.