

Minutes of Meeting
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Interview #1
August 4, 2021
3:00 p.m.

The Kootenai County Board of Commissioners: Chairman Chris Fillios and Commissioner Bill Brooks met to discuss the following agenda item. Also present was Deputy Clerk Tina Ginorio. Also present were CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) CEO (Chief Executive Officer) KJ Brant, CASA Advocate Supervisors Carol Brennan, Jess Burke, Stacy Mattis and Cheryl Freeman, and Schwartz Law Representatives Chris Schwartz, Lisa Chesbro and Courtney Gillihan. Ms. Brennan was present via teleconference. Commissioner Leslie Duncan was excused.

- A. **Call to Order:** Chairman Chris Fillios called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.
- B. **Changes to the Agenda (Action):** There were no changes to the agenda.
- C. **Business (Discussion):**

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Legal Representative Interview: (Chris Schwartz/Courtney Gillihan and Lisa Chesbro/Schwartz Law Office, P.C.)

The CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) Representatives KJ Brant, Carol Brennan, Jess Burke, Stacy Mattis and Cheryl Freeman took turns asking the following series of questions of Schwartz Law Office, P.C. Representatives Chris Schwartz, Lisa Chesbro and Courtney Gillihan.

1. Tell us what you know about CASA?
 - Have you ever worked on a case in which CASA was involved?
 - If yes, in what capacity?
 - Did CASA present information?
 - What did you think of their presentation and/or do you find them a valuable asset to the court?
 - If so, what experience do you have in child protection cases in general?
 - Tell us your impression of the roles of an Advocate vs. a Supervisor.
2. Have you had experience dealing with opposing counsel that will not listen to or respect opinions of your client?
 - How do you handle that?
 - Willing to take on confrontational attorney?
 - Willing to be part of team that puts the child first and not necessarily in agreement with the court or Child Services?
 - IE. Toddler who has only known foster family now being removed to go to relative who has no relationship with child because family members get first dibs over child.
 - Would you be willing for longer fight and more costs if it was in best interest of child, even if doesn't align with legal path?

3. You will be representing the Advocates who are hands-on with children in the foster system. Some Advocates can often be emotional about cases.
 - Do you have experience dealing with highly emotional clients?
 - What tools do you use when working with these types of clients?
 - Occasions are going to arise where you disagree with the opinion of the Advocate. How do you handle situations where you need to legally advise a client who is opposed to your legal opinion?
 - Would you encourage advocates to communicate with you personally about cases? How about supervisors?
4. Part of the contract requires you to make yourself available to Advocates outside of the courtroom to advise and assist on cases.
 - Are you comfortable doing this?
 - Are you amenable to having “office hours” within the CASA office?
 - Will Advocates have access to you prior to court appearances?
 - New Advocate training takes place 2-3 times a year. Are you willing to attend training to assist in teaching Advocates how to present in court and what is the best way to present position?
5. Do you currently represent any parties where CASA is a party to the case?
6. There will be, at some point, a calendaring conflict. Who do you select for covering these appearances and why?
7. Do you currently employ support staff?
 - How many and what roles?
 - If yes, who maintains your calendar?
 - Are you prepared to take on a large case load with number of staff employed?
 - If no, how do you plan on resolving this issue?
8. If more than one attorney under contract, how will you split up cases?
 - Will the same attorney handles cases from start to finish or will each case be a team effort?
9. What is your role in the context of the MultiDisciplinary Teams mentioned in the CPA?
10. What is your approach to negotiations with the Department? Do you favor long-term cooperation/collaboration or do you favor short-term/case-specific goals? Why?
11. What is the extent of your training in trauma? What does “TBRI” stand for? Would you be willing to avail yourself of continuing education in areas pertinent to the work of CASA, even if you did not get continuing legal education credit for it?
12. How has or how will the Family First Act change CP cases and what effect will it have on the way you approach your representation of CASA?

Chairman Fillios asked what caused most Child Protective (CP) cases.

Mr. Schwartz stated that the most frequent cause was drugs. He listed some of the basic factors seen in such cases. He described the process by which a child might be entered into their system.

Chairman Fillios asked what level of trauma children experience when they are removed from parental custody.

Mr. Schwartz described the difficulties faced by the child while a case was being litigated. He explained the positive impact a CASA representative could have on a child's situation during a case.

Ms. Brant explained some additional factors that would influence CASA's selection in this process.

- D. Public Comment:** This section is reserved for citizens wishing to address the Board regarding a County related issue. Idaho Law prohibits Board action on items brought under this section except in an emergency circumstance. Comments related to future public hearings should be held for that public hearing. There were no public comments.
- E. Adjournment (Action):** Chairman Fillios adjourned the meeting at 3:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM BRANNON, CLERK

CHRIS FILLIOS, CHAIRMAN

BY: _____
Tina Ginorio, Deputy Clerk
