

## **DISTRICT COURT ANNOUNCES NEW CIVIL CASE PILOT PROGRAM FOR NORFOLK COUNTY**

Hon. Paul C. Dawley, Chief Justice of the District Court, announces **Tuesday, May 31, 2016** as the commencement date for a new Civil Pilot Program involving court procedures in all civil money damage actions in the five District Courts in Norfolk County: Brookline, Dedham, Quincy, Stoughton, and Wrentham. **The Pilot Program will apply to all civil money damage actions commenced in those courts on or after May 31, 2016.**

The Standing Order and Civil Pilot Program will seek to improve the effective and efficient management of civil money damage cases in the District Court, from commencement to disposition, by separating these cases from other court business to provide exclusive, focused, and consistent judicial and administrative attention. The purpose of the Civil Pilot Program “is to determine whether the procedures it requires are feasible and effective in reducing costs and delay in the disposition of civil money damage actions in the District Court.” Following an adequate period of experience, the new procedures will be reviewed and evaluated. After any needed amendments, the new procedures will be considered for statewide implementation.

The Civil Pilot Program will include only a few departures from existing procedural requirements. Rather, its focus is on when and where court events occur in civil money damage actions. The Standing Order divides civil money damage actions into two categories: “consumer credit debt” actions, and all other money damage claims. The Standing Order also creates “Designated Civil Sessions,” which will be conducted by specially assigned judges, and will focus exclusively on civil cases, including the conduct of trials.

Several of the forms currently required in District Court civil actions have been modified for use in the Civil Pilot Program. A revised Statement of Damages form will be required at the commencement of an action, and is available at: <http://www.mass.gov/courts/forms/dc/dc-forms-gen.html>. Additional forms for use in the Civil Pilot Program will be available online and at the courts involved.

Other components of the Civil Pilot Program are the authorization of attorney voir dire in jury trials, and the designation of specific court personnel as “DCS Civil Liaisons,” who will be available at each pilot site, and are responsible for communicating with counsel as needed to expedite the movement of each case to disposition.

The Civil Pilot Program is based on recommendations from the District Court Committee on Civil Litigation Alternatives, which included broad representation from the Civil Bar. A preliminary draft resulting from the Committee’s work was the subject of a Bench-Bar Conference held at the Dedham District Court on April 6, 2016. Final revisions of the Standing Order resulted from comments and suggestions made at that well-attended conference. The Standing Order has been approved by Trial Court Chief Justice Paula M. Carey.