



District of Columbia Sentencing Commission

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January 20, 2026

Hybrid Meeting Held at 441 4th St. NW, Suite 430S,
Washington, DC and via Zoom

Voting Members in Attendance:

Hon. Danya Dayson
Katerina Semyonova
Nazgol Ghandnoosh
Hon. Rainey Brandt

Frederick Cooke, Jr.
Cedric Hendricks
Kathleen Houck

Hon. Todd Edelman
Raymond Hulser
Joel Castón

Non-Voting Members in Attendance:

Amanda O'Sullivan

Christina Hillyer
For Sonya Thompson

Staff in Attendance:

Linden Fry
Maeghan Buckley
Emily Blume

Taylor Tarnalicki
Mia Hebb

Brittany Bunch
Patrick Sheehan

Monthly Meeting Introduction – Action Item, Judge Danya Dayson (Chairwoman).

Judge Dayson called the January monthly meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. A roll call was completed, and a quorum was established.

1. Review and Approval of the Minutes from the November 18, 2025, Commission Meeting – Action Item, Judge Danya Dayson.

Members reviewed the draft minutes from the November 2025 Commission meeting. A roll call vote was taken, resulting in the approval of the minutes (nine votes in favor, zero abstentions, and zero opposed).¹

2. Kathleen Houck, Esq. Introduction and Welcome – Information Item, Judge Dayson.

Kathleen Houck, Special Counsel at the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, was welcomed as a new voting member.² Ms. Houck expressed her excitement about joining the Commission.

¹ Judge Brandt did not participate in the vote to approve the minutes.

² Appointed by the United States Attorney for the District of Columbia pursuant to DC Code 3-102(a)(1)(C).

3. Patrick Sheehan Introduction and Welcome – Information Item, Linden Fry (Executive Director).

Linden Fry introduced Patrick Sheehan, the Commission's new Statistician. Prior to joining the Commission, Mr. Sheehan earned a master's degree in Measurement, Statistics, and Evaluation from the University of Maryland and is currently completing his dissertation for a Ph. D. in the same program. Mr. Sheehan is excited to apply his background to support the Commission's data and statistical needs.

4. Director's Report – Information Item, Mr. Fry.

a. 2026 Guidelines Manual Published and Implemented

The 2026 Voluntary Sentencing Guidelines Manual was published on December 11, 2025, and took effect on January 1, 2026. The Commission aims to continue this publication schedule so that future manuals are published before the end of each year and take effect on January 1st.

b. 2025 Annual Report Schedule

The Commission's 2025 Annual Report is currently in production. The upcoming Report will be sent to Commission members for review on March 10, 2026. At the March Commission meeting, staff will present the 2025 Annual Report data to Commission members. Feedback from the Commission will be due on March 20, 2026. Staff plans to incorporate the feedback and send the finalized Report to Judge Dayson on April 1, 2026. The 2025 Annual Report will go to the printers on April 15, 2026, and the Commission will submit the report to the D.C. Council by April 30, 2026.

c. Agency Budget Update

The Commission was required to propose a FY 2027 budget of \$1,625,368 to the Mayor's Office, representing a 10.7% reduction from the current FY 2026 budget of \$1,821,081. This budget reduction is slightly above the standard 8% reduction requested from most D.C. Government agencies because some regular Commission expenses were shifted to one-time funding in FY 2026. To fund these expenses in FY 2027, further cuts were required. To meet the requested budget cut target, the Commission proposed a budget that eliminated the currently vacant Legal Analyst position and reduced GRID server contingency funds. If the position is cut in the Mayor's proposed budget, the Commission will request funding from the Council to reinstate and fund the position. Additionally, the agency requested a capital budget enhancement to support GRID server upgrades and to migrate the GRID system to the Cloud.

d. Sentencing Commission Annual Judiciary and Public Safety Committee Performance Review

The Commission is not currently scheduled to have a D.C. Council performance review hearing this year. Commission staff are currently developing responses to the Judiciary and Public Safety

Committee's performance questions. The responses will be submitted to the Chair of the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee, Councilwoman Pinto.

Following the Director's Report, Mr. Fry thanked the Bureau of Prisons for the Commission staff's recent tour of USP Hazelton's facilities.

5. Scheduling 2-3 In-Person Sentencing Commission Meetings Per Year – Discussion Item, Judge Dayson.

Judge Dayson proposed implementing two to three in-person Sentencing Commission meetings per year to facilitate engagement and relationship-building among Commission members and staff. Mr. Fry suggested having the first in-person meeting in March for the Annual Report presentation. The Commission will continue this discussion at a future meeting.

6. Criminal Rule 11(c)(1)(C) Full Fiscal Year 2025 Report – Information and Discussion Item, Emily Blume (Research Analyst)

Ms. Blume presented an overview of the Rule 11(c)(1)(C) trends for the fiscal year 2025, which ran from October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025.

To view the FY 2025 Criminal Rule 11(c)(1)(C) Report, visit: [FY2025 Yearly Report | scdc](#).

Some of the key findings from this presentation include:

- There were 115 Rule 11(c)(1)(C) pleas sentenced in FY 2025, representing 5% of the total counts sentenced;
- 91% of sentences following a Rule 11(c)(1)(C) plea in FY 2025 were prison sentences;
- Combined, Violent and Homicide offenses represented 63% of sentences imposed under a Rule 11(c)(1)(C) plea; and
- Of the 80 individuals sentenced as the result of a Rule 11(c)(1)(C) plea, 94% were Black, 95% were male, and the average age at offense was 29 years old.

Following the presentation, Ms. Blume opened the floor for questions and discussion. Commission member Kathleen Houck asked if data was available on the percentage of Rule 11(c)(1)(C) plea agreements where the agreement was to a specific sentence versus a sentence range. Taylor Tarnalicki, the Commission's Research Director, explained that this information is not available in the data and would require manually reviewing docket entries. Mr. Fry added that the plea agreements themselves are not converted to data; therefore, the Commission only gets information on whether a sentence followed an accepted Rule 11(c)(1)(C) plea and the actual sentence imposed.

Commission member Nazgol Ghandnoosh asked for clarification on the No Criminal History Score (CHS) category. Ms. Blume explained that the category applies when a CHS was not used in sentencing, which is different from a zero CHS. A zero CHS indicates the defendant has no scorable prior convictions. Ms. Blume noted that Commission staff confirmed with the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) that the two defendants classified under the No CHS category had waived the Presentence Investigation Report (PSR). Mr. Fry added that, historically, waiving the PSR

is more common in Rule 11(c)(1)(C) cases, likely because the parties have already agreed to a specific sentence, reducing the need for a full report.

Before concluding the meeting, Mr. Fry noted that the responses to the Council's performance questions highlight the breadth of work performed by Commission staff, which may not always be fully visible to Commission members. He proposed adding an agenda item to the next Commission meeting for staff to briefly present their primary duties and major projects.

Next Scheduled Meeting: February 17, 2026

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Meeting adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

NEXT MEETING:
February 17, 2026
Via Zoom

To view the video recording of the full discussion, visit <https://scdc.dc.gov/page/commission-meetings>.