

THE JUDICIAL NOMINATING COMMISSION
RHODE ISLAND SUPERIOR COURT
ASSOCIATE JUSTICE VACANCY (NUGENT) INTERVIEW MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2026 – MINUTES

Chairperson Krystle Tadesse called the meeting to order at 5:09 p.m. in Conference Rooms A, B, and C, Second Floor of the Department of Administration Building. Ms. Tadesse announced that the purpose of the meeting was to interview candidates for the Superior Court vacancy created by the retirement of Associate Justice Stephen P. Nugent and to vote on candidates to forward to the Governor for his consideration to fill the vacancy.

Laura Jeanne Verdecchia, Legal Assistant to the Commission, kept the Minutes. Ms. Verdecchia called the roll. All nine Commissioners were in attendance: Chairperson Krystle Tadesse, Thomas Casale, David A. Holley, James Lepore, Lamel Moore, Rebecca T. Partington, Jina Petrarca, Jason Preciphs, and Ajie Saho. Ms. Tadesse declared that a quorum was present.

Ms. Tadesse noted that the Notice of the Meeting had been posted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act on December 30, 2025. A copy of that Notice is annexed to these Minutes.

On a motion by Ms. Petrarca and seconded by Mr. Preciphs, it was unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of January 28, 2026, meeting of the Judicial Nominating Commission.

The following individuals were then interviewed for the current Associate Justice vacancy on the Rhode Island Superior Court created by the retirement of Associate Justice Stephen P. Nugent:

Joanna M. Achille
Rebecca Aitchison
Stephen R. Archambault
Angelyne E. Cooper-Bailey
Maria F. Deaton
Carly Beauvais Iafrate
Robert Eben Johnson IV
Kelly A. McElroy
Joseph D. Whelan
Ania M. Zielinski

On a motion by Mr. Lepore, seconded by Ms. Partington, it was unanimously voted to go into Executive Session pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws §§ 42-46-4 and 42-46-5(a)(1) (discussion of the job performance, character of physical or mental health of the person), each candidate having been notified in writing on December 30, 2025, of their right to request to be considered in open session.

On motion by Ms. Saho, seconded by Mr. Holley, the Minutes of the Executive Session were sealed by unanimous vote. On motion by Mr. Lepore, seconded by Mr. Preciphs, it was unanimously agreed to return to open session.

Ms. Tadesse announced that the minutes of the Executive Session were sealed by unanimous vote, and that the Commission would now vote on names to send to Governor for consideration to fill the vacancy.

The Commission Members conducted voting for the position of Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court created by the retirement of Associate Justice Stephen P. Nugent on written ballots. After the first round of voting, six (6) applicants received a total of five (5) or more votes, three (3) of whom were tied with five (5) votes.

Ms. Tadesse announced the three (3) candidates whose names would be included on the list to the Governor (Stephen R. Archambault, Carly Beauvais Iafrate, and Ania M. Zielinski), and the three (3) candidates who were tied (Joanna M. Achille, Angelyne E. Cooper-Bailey, and Robert Eben Johnson, IV). Ms. Tadesse announced that the three (3) tied candidates would proceed to a second round of voting, with each Commissioner receiving two (2) votes.

The second round of voting was required in accordance with the Uniform Rules of Procedure for the Judicial Nominating Commission, 545-RICR-10-00 R.I. Code R. §1.5. For the second round of voting, each Commissioner was allotted two votes for the three (3) tied candidates, and the two (2) candidates receiving the most votes would be included on the list. Following the second round of voting, the following names will be forwarded to Governor Daniel J. McKee, in alphabetical order, for his consideration:

Joanna M. Achille*
Stephen R. Archambault
Carly Beauvais Iafrate
Robert Eben Johnson IV*
Ania M. Zielinski

**after the second round of voting*

A copy of the voting charts are attached hereto.

There being no further business, on a motion by Ms. Petrarca, seconded by Mr. Lepore, it was unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Laura Jeanne Verdecchia

Laura Jeanne Verdecchia, Legal Assistant

**RHODE ISLAND JUDICIAL NOMINATING COMMISSION
MEETING NOTICE**

Wednesday, February 4, 2026 @ 5:00 p.m.

**LOCATION: Department of Administration
One Capitol Hill, Conference Rooms A/B/C, 2nd Floor
Providence, Rhode Island 02908**

PURPOSES:

An open meeting to:

(1) Approve the Minutes of the Open Meeting of the Commission held on January 28, 2026.

(2) Interview the following candidates being considered for the Rhode Island Superior Court Associate Justice vacancy created by the retirement of Associate Justice Stephen P. Nugent:

Joanna M. Achille
Rebecca Aitchison
Stephen R. Archambault
Angelyne E. Cooper-Bailey
Maria F. Deaton
Carly Beauvais Iafrate
Robert Eben Johnson IV
Kelly A. McElroy
Joseph D. Whelan
Ania M. Zielinski

(3) Vote to select from the aforementioned candidates being considered for the Superior Court Associate Justice vacancy created by the retirement of Associate Justice Stephen P. Nugent whose names will be sent to the Governor for his consideration.

Commission Members may elect to go into Executive Session to consider and act upon such matters as may be considered at a meeting closed pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws § 42-46-5(a)(1) for discussions of the job performance, character, or physical or mental health of a person or persons who have been notified in writing and advised that they may require that the discussion be held at open meeting.

Pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws §§ 42-46-6 (c) and (f), this notice will be posted on December 30, 2025, at the Office of the Department of Administration, the State House Library and electronically with the Secretary of State as well as on the Judicial Nominating Commission website. Anyone wishing to attend this meeting who may have special needs for access or services such as an interpreter, please contact Laura Jeanne Verdecchia at (401) 455-7611 twenty-four hours in advance of the scheduled meeting.

KRYSTLE G. TADESSE
CHAIRPERSON

ROUND 1
Master

JUDICIAL NOMINATING COMMISSION VOTING TALLY
SUPERIOR COURT – ASSOCIATE JUSTICE STEPHEN P. NUGENT VACANCY
FEBRUARY 4, 2026

NAME	Achille	Aitchison	Archambault	Cooper-Bailey	Deaton	Iafrate	Johnson	McElroy	Whelan	Zielinski
Casale	✓		✓	✓		✓				✓
Holley	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓	
Lepore	✓		✓		✓	✓				✓
Moore		✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
Partington		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓
Petrarca	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			
Preciphs	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	
Tadesse				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Saho		✓	✓	✓			✓			✓
TOTAL	(5)	3	(7)	(5)	4	(6)	(5)	1	3	(6)

ROUND 2
Master

JUDICIAL NOMINATING COMMISSION VOTING TALLY
SUPERIOR COURT – ASSOCIATE JUSTICE STEPHEN P. NUGENT VACANCY
FEBRUARY 4, 2026

NAME	Achille	Aitchison	Archambault	Cooper-Bailey	Deaton	Iafrate	Johnson	McElroy	Whelan	Zielinski
Casale	✓									
Holley	✓						✓			
Lepore	✓						✓			
Moore				✓			✓			
Partington	✓			✓						
Petrarca	✓						✓			
Preciphs	✓			✓						
Tadesse				✓			✓			
Saho				✓			✓			
TOTAL	(6)			5			(6)			