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AMENDED on July 29, 2020

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To: Members of the 18th Judicial District

GUILFORD CO., C.S.C.

From: Honorable Teresa Vincent, Chief District Court Judge

BY 

Chief Justice Cheri Beasley entered an order implementing measures designed to curb the spread of COVID-19 and minimize the risk of exposure caused by crowded sessions of court. Consistent with the Chief Justice's order, effective Monday, March 16, 2020, several superior court, and district court proceedings of the 18th Judicial District will be rescheduled for **September 1, 2020, at the earliest, with several exceptions, which appear on the following pages.**

The emergency directive of the Chief Justice does not apply to proceedings in which a jury has already been empaneled and, it does not prohibit a judge or other judicial officer from exercising in chambers or *ex parte* jurisdiction conferred by law upon that judge or judicial officer, as provided by law.

The Clerk's Office will remain open from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm for the public effective July 27, 2020, unless otherwise notified. After 12:20pm, Attorneys and the public may drop off filings in both the Greensboro and High Point Courthouses, before 4:30pm, to be processed the same day. However, unless you are required to appear in-person to conduct your business, attorneys and the public are strongly encouraged to use email and telephone to communicate with staff of the Eighteenth Judicial District. The Office of the District Attorney and the Public Defender offices are also open to the public. **All individuals that visit either of the above-referenced offices are required to wear a face mask or covering.**

Online court services are available for handling some court business, including citation services, paying your ticket, court payments, signing up for court date notifications and reminders, e-filing court documents for certain courts and case types, and more.

CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT

- Involuntary Commitments will be conducted as needed, subject to necessary precautions, including, but not limited to, video testimony.
- Guardianship Hearings will be conducted as needed, subject to necessary health precautions, as determined by the Clerk of Court.
- Estate Administration matters will be conducted. However, person to person interactions will be limited if health concerns arise, as determined by the Clerk of Court.

MAGISTRATE AND SMALL CLAIMS

- The Greensboro and High Point magistrate offices will operate as normal for Warrants for Arrest, Magistrate's Orders, Criminal Summons, Initial Appearances, Cash Bonds/Property Bonds, Involuntary Commitment Orders, Juvenile Petitions and Secured and Non-Secured Custody Orders. **Courtroom 1B (Administrative Court) shall be closed**

effective August 3, 2020, until otherwise notified. All District Court arbitrators, attorney(s), or litigant(s) may request a remote hearing instead of an in-person arbitration. Please contact Doretta Sims in the Judges' Chambers with any questions at (336) 412-7800.

District Court

- The office hours are from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.
- Judges will be available to consider *Ex-Parte* Emergency Custody request(s) and other matters, if appropriate, that may be addressed *ex parte*, such as a Motion to Recall an Order for Arrest 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.
- All court personnel, litigants, and attorneys are required to wear a face mask or face covering. The county is providing face masks at the courthouse entrance for persons in need of one.

Arraignment/Administrative Courts (Courtrooms 1A&1B (GSO) /3B (Hpt.))

- This court shall close for arraignment/administrative cases effective Monday, August 3, 2020, unless otherwise notified.

Civil Domestic Violence Court

- Courtrooms 2B (GSO) and 3A (High Point) will operate as usual, handling domestic violence *ex-parte* matters and return hearings, unless otherwise notified.

Civil/Domestic District Courts

- Courtrooms 2B & 3A (Hpt) – Courts will operate as indicated in the following provisions. Emergency custody hearings will also be held in courtrooms 2B & 3A (Hpt). Request for ex-parte emergency custody orders may be handled remotely or in person. Please contact Stephanie Wallace or Pat Dixon (Trial Court Coordinators) to request remote hearings. Courtrooms 2E and 3A (in GSO & Hpt) will remain open per COVID19 protocol. **The courts shall continue to hear Pro-se and Magistrate appeals cases per the COVID19 Protocol. However, the court shall limit the cases for social distancing purposes.**
- There will be remote monthly calendars calls for courtrooms 2E and 3A (GSO & Hpt), until otherwise notified.
- **The court shall conduct daily docket calls in a virtual courtroom at 9:00 am Monday through Friday unless courts are closed. The court shall email virtual courtroom links to attorneys. Pro Se litigants may also receive a virtual courtroom link upon request. Please contact Stephanie Wallace or Pat Dixon if you need assistance.**
- **To support the Clerk of Superior Court's staggered schedules, most courts shall recess no later than at 1:00 pm each day.**
- Special Settings – Please contact the Trial Court Coordinator Mrs. Stephanie Wallace in Greensboro at (336) 412-7800 or Mrs. Pat Dixon in High Point at (336) 822-3785 to reschedule.

- Please contact Stephanie Wallace at (336) 412-7800 or Pat Dixon (336) 822-6785 if you have any questions.

Criminal/Traffic District Court

- On July 6, 2020, Courtroom 1C & 3C (Criminal Courts in GSO & Hpt.) will resume subject to limitations regarding the number of defendants on dockets due to COVID19. Cases that were previously scheduled for July 2020 and in upcoming months will remain calendared for hearing (unless otherwise notified). **The DA shall calendar felony court cases in 1C on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The ADA will limit the number of cases on the calendar to allow for social distancing. Therefore, an Assistant District Attorney may contact attorneys in advance of the courtroom regarding continuances for newer cases to manage the number of defendants on a docket. Court shall begin at 9:00 am. However, the court may request defendants and/or attorneys to report back to court later to allow for social distancing. There will be no more than one hundred (100) cases scheduled in each courtroom, except in courtroom 3C Probable Cause Court in High Point due to the low number of defendants that appear for these cases. Also, the Court will ensure that limited numbers of defendants are seated in courtrooms to achieve social distancing. (See COVID 19 Protocol for Criminal Courts for additional information). To support the Clerk of Superior Court's staggered schedules, the court shall recess at 1:00 pm each day.**
- On July 6, 2020, Courtroom 1D/3C (Traffic Court in GSO & Hpt.) will resume for Driving While Impaired cases only subject to limitations regarding the number of defendants on dockets due to COVID19. Cases that were previously scheduled for July 2020 and in upcoming months will remain calendared for hearing (unless otherwise notified). **Attorneys and represented defendants are requested to report to the courtroom(s) at 9:00 am. However, the court may require that defendants and/or attorneys report back to court later to allow for social distancing.** The Court will ensure that limited numbers of defendants are seated in courtrooms to achieve social distancing. (See COVID 19 Protocol for Criminal Courts for additional information). Attorneys requesting Non-Driving While Impaired hearings shall calendar such cases for the Remote Traffic Calendar (except for triple-digit speeds and DWLR Impaired Revocations). If attorneys schedule non-traffic cases not related to DWI cases in a traffic courtroom, the Court will remove or continue the cases. **To support the Clerk of Superior Court's staggered schedules, the court shall recess at 1:00 pm each day.**

- **Courtroom 3B (Hpt.- Administrative Court) shall be closed unless otherwise notified effective August 3, 2020.**
- Remote Traffic Court (for attorneys) shall be held (unless otherwise notified) on Wednesdays from 9:00 am to 11:00 am and on Thursdays in High Point from 9:00 to 11:00 am. (See COVID19 Protocol for Traffic Courts and Remote Hearings).
- Remote Traffic Court (for self-represented defendants) shall begin on Wednesday, August 19, 2020, and shall be heard on each Wednesday from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm for cases filed in Greensboro, NC; and on each Thursday for cases filed in High Point, NC, unless otherwise notified. Self-represented defendants may obtain a remote hearing request form from the Clerk of Superior Court or at www.nccourts.org. The form is to be submitted to the clerk's office at the following email address: Guilford.GB.CriminalDistrict@nccourts.org (for Greensboro cases) or Guilford.HP.CriminalDistrict@nccourts.org. (for High Point cases).
- Courtroom 2C felony court cases will be heard in 1C on Tuesdays and Thursdays unless otherwise notified. (See Section on 1C for additional information) Domestic First Appearances shall be heard with First Appearances on Mondays at 2:00 pm unless otherwise notified. The court shall continue to hear First Appearances/Bond Motions shall at 2:00 pm each day, except bond motions are heard Tuesday-Friday (unless otherwise notified).
- Courtroom 3D (Hpt) is open for First Appearances/Bond Motions at 2:00 pm each day (unless otherwise notified).
- Assistant District Attorneys will NOT call calendars but will process defendants and attorneys cases upon arrival. This practice will continue until otherwise notified.

Juvenile Abuse Neglect & Dependency Court/Delinquency Court

- Courtrooms are open only for all matters per the COVID19 protocol. The Court shall hear cases remotely when it is feasible to do so. To support the Clerk of Superior Court's staggered schedules, the court shall recess no later than 1:00 pm each day in DHHS Court. Juvenile Delinquency Court is NOT subject to this provision. Juvenile Delinquency Court shall resume hearing ALL types of cases on Monday, August 10, 2020. The court is requesting that cases be handled remotely whenever possible.

Divorces

- The Court shall continue to hear divorces on Mondays at 2:00 pm. The court request that attorneys drop off summary judgments by 4:00 pm the Friday before the court date.

Child Support Court

- This Court shall be open with limitations on the number of cases set; and shall restrict the number of litigants allowed in the courtroom. (See COVID19 Protocol for Child Support Court). To support the Clerk of Superior Court's staggered schedules, the court shall recess at 1:00 pm each day.

Add-On Cases

- In order to comply with the directive of the Chief Justice dated July 21, 2020, the COVID-19 coordinator is required "to approve court calendars before they are publicly distributed to ensure social distancing is possible ..." Such approval will in turn be derived from the pre-determined maximum occupancy allowed in the courtrooms, as mandated by the county. As a result, attorneys are cautioned against attempting to add clients to dockets after the calendars have been approved and published, and must be aware that in many instances, courtroom capacities will be maxed out due to the required social distancing guidelines.

Specialty Courts

Specialty Courts (Adult DTC, Mental Health Court, and Juvenile DTC) will operate under the regular schedule unless otherwise notified. However, in some instances, only non-compliant participants may be ordered to appear in person for court sessions. Courts session also may be held remotely when it is feasible to do so.

Mediation Program

- Mediators shall conduct orientation sessions online.
- They shall also conduct mediations remotely.
- The Mediation offices will be open from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.
- Contact the Guilford County Mediation officer at (336) 412-7815 if you have any questions.

Judicial Waivers/Hospitalizations

- The court shall conduct hearings on a regular schedule.

Minor Settlement Conferences

- Minor settlements will be heard every other Wednesday in courtroom 2A at 2:00 pm in Greensboro and courtroom 3A in High Point, NC, by appointment. However, the court is requesting that attorneys conduct these hearings remotely. Please contact Joyce Morant in Greensboro at (336) 412-7800 or Pat Dixon in High Point at (336) 822-6785 to schedule a settlement conference.

Covid-19 Positive Protocol for District and Superior Courts

- **Test Results:** Those attorneys who frequently conduct business at the Guilford courthouses and who test positive for the COVID-19 virus are strongly encouraged to report their diagnosis to Amanda Leazer, the AOC-designated COVID-19 coordinator for the Guilford court system. She is required to keep all information confidential and will destroy everything related to the disclosure after she cross-checks any names of any employees with whom the attorney may have come into contact with the information the Guilford Health Department possesses, to ensure that contact tracing is as comprehensive as possible.
- **Masks:** Senior Resident Superior Court Judge John Craig and Chief District Court Judge Teresa H. Vincent issued an administrative order effective July 7, 2020, **requiring ALL** court personnel and individuals in the courthouse to wear a face mask or covering. (This includes Law Enforcement Officers.)

Superior Court

We will run courts on June 1, assuming that is the official start date. **Jury trials will not begin until October 5, 2020, at the earliest.**

Criminal Court

- Until September 8, 2020, court sessions will continue to consist of nonjury matters, including Administrative hearings, guilty pleas, bond motions, and other motions.
- Probation Violation calendars will remain on their scheduled weeks.
- Calendars will be done daily to control the number of people who come to the courtrooms

- After receiving AOC approval in advance, jury trials may be held in locations other than the courthouses in order to adequately maintain social distancing

Civil Court

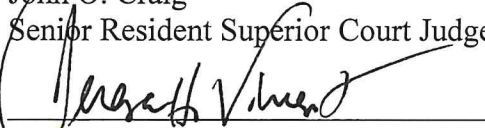
- There will not be any trials for the first month
- We will focus on the backlog of motions
- Some weeks we will run two civil courts
- Calendars will be done daily in order to control the number of people who come to the courtrooms
- The presiding judge shall have the sole discretion to hold remote hearings via WebEx, Zoom, or some other appropriate videoconferencing program, to be set up by the attorneys or parties
- The Trial court Coordinators at both courthouses have been instructed to begin transitioning all hearings to remote video conferencing. This will begin in mid-August 2020 by requesting, but not requiring, the attorneys and parties to set up their hearings remotely. It is planned that after Labor Day, 2020, all Superior Court civil matters will be conducted via Zoom or WebEx.
- **Masks:** Senior Resident Superior Court John Craig and Chief District Court Judge Teresa H. Vincent issued an administrative order effective July 7, 2020, **requiring ALL** court personnel and individuals in the courthouse to wear a face mask or covering. (This includes Law Enforcement Officers.)

For Civil Court matters, please contact Brittany Robinson in Greensboro or Wendy Stuart in High Point.

This the 30th day of July, 2020.



John O. Craig
Senior Resident Superior Court Judge



Teresa H. Vincent
Chief District Court Judge, 18th Judicial District

***Provisions in red denote changes since the entry of the previous order.**