

WEBB COUNTY 49TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

COURT RULES FOR REMOTE HEARINGS

The Governor has declared a state of emergency and the Office of Court Administration (OCA) has suggested that all non-critical court proceedings should be suspended. However, technology and state law allows options not previously available. As such, Webb County 49th District Court will continue to conduct hearings if the parties have the technology and desire to do so. The following restrictions and limitations will apply but should be similar to what is required for an in-person hearing. Any requests for a courtroom hearing will be considered but likely postponed. It is anticipated most parties will agree to a “virtual” hearing.

PROCEDURES FOR LITIGANTS:

Webb County 49th District Court will be using Zoom video conferencing. It is free to download at zoom.us or you can download the app directly to your cell phone. The Court Reporter or Coordinator will email you a link to the hearing. Your computer must have internet access, a video camera, and a headset with a microphone for best results. IF YOU CAN ONLY PARTICIPATE VIA TELEPHONE, YOU MUST COORDINATE IT THE DAY BEFORE WITH THE COURT REPORTER.

Ensure the Court Reporter, Cyndy Lenz (clenz@webbcountytx.gov) and Court Coordinator Maryel Lopez (mlopez@webbcountytx.gov) – for civil cases, and Court Coordinator Alma Martinez (almamartinez@webbcountytx.gov) – for criminal cases, Terry Alfaro (talfaro@webbcountytx.gov) – for tax cases, and Gracie Solis (gsolis@webbcountytx.gov) – for family cases, have your email address not later than 4 pm the day before any hearing. Because of the importance of the record, the Court Reporter, Cyndy, and/or Judge Lopez, will be the “host” of all hearings.

If you intend to offer any exhibits during the hearing, you need to email them to all parties, the court reporter (email above) and the judge (joelopez@webbcountytx.gov) not later than 4 pm the day before the hearing. The subject of the email should be the full cause number and “-Plaintiff Exhibits” (or cause number “-Defendant Exhibits”). The documents must be in .pdf format. The Court cannot consider any exhibits not emailed to the court reporter in a timely manner. If you fail to follow this requirement, the court reporter will not maintain these documents in the record.

Any responses or replies e-filed with the Clerk less than 48 hours before the hearing should also be emailed in .pdf format to the judge. They will NOT be considered filed and must be e-filed with the Clerk as usual. Cases for the judge’s reference need not be e-filed with the Clerk but should be emailed to the judge at least 4 hours before the hearing to allow consideration. Documents which have been e-filed and accepted need not be re-filed with the Clerk.

FOR THE PUBLIC:

THE OPEN COURTS PROVISION OF TEXAS LAW ALLOWS ALL TEXANS ACCESS TO COURT PROCEEDINGS. AS SUCH, ANYONE MAY ACQUIRE ACCESS CODES TO HEARINGS THROUGH THE COURT’S COUNTY WEBSITE (webbcountytx.gov/DC49th). IF YOU ARE VIEWING, PLEASE MUTE YOUR CONNECTION TO PREVENT DISRUPTION TO THE PROCEEDINGS. THE PUBLIC MAY VIEW OR LISTEN TO PROCEEDINGS, BUT **VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDING IS PROHIBITED.**

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Ensure the Court Reporter, Cyndy Lenz (clenz@webbcountytx.gov), Court Coordinator Noemi Elizondo (noemi@zapatacountytx.org), and Joe Ann Hernandez (joeann@webbcountytx.gov) have your email address not later than 4 pm the day before any hearing. Because of the importance of the record, the Court Reporter, Cyndy, and/or Judge Lopez, will be the “host” of all hearings.

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