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Detailed Memorandum Concerning Court Operations – June 1, 2021

FILED

To: Members of the 18th/Judicial District/24th Bar

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From: Honorable John O. Craig, Senior Resident Superior Court Judge

Honorable Teresa H. Vincent, Chief District Court Judge

District Attorney Avery Crump

Public Defender John Nieman

Clerk of Superior Court Lisa Johnson-Tonkins

GUILFORD CO., C.S.C.

BY 

On April 12, 2021, Chief Justice Newby extended an order entered in January 2021, allowing the Courts to implement measures designed to curb the spread of COVID-19 and minimize the risk of exposure caused by crowded sessions of court. On May 14, 2021, the Chief Justice relaxed the COVID-19 restrictions and allowed local court officials to set their own parameters due to the declining threat. Consistent with the Chief Justice's orders, effective Monday, June 7, 2021, several district court proceedings of the 18th /24th Judicial District may be rescheduled for at least 30 days, with exceptions, which appear on the following pages. Superior Court proceedings will also effectuate changes beginning June 7, 2021 and are outlined in more detail below.

Court offices in the Guilford County Courthouses and Justice Center will remain open for business. 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.

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
- Maintain normal office hours for filings unless otherwise notified
- 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.
- Estate hearings shall continue to be heard. Remote hearings are available upon request.
- Special Proceeding shall continue to operate under current protocol.

Magistrate and Small Claims

- The Greensboro and High Point Magistrate's offices will operate as normal for Warrants for Arrest, Magistrate's Orders, Criminal Summons, Initial Appearances, Cash Bonds/Property Bonds, Involuntary Commitment Orders, Administrative Courts, Juvenile Petitions and Secured and Non-Secured Custody Orders.

- All Small Claims in-person court proceedings shall continue to operate normally with limited dockets. (Exceptions may apply – See current status of the Cares Act for Summary Ejectments). Remote hearings are considered upon request.
- Magistrates will continue to conduct marriage ceremonies by appointment only. Contact the Magistrate's Office for additional information.
- Courtroom 1A is open for court business. However, dockets shall be limited to 200 defendants effective June 7, 2021. In the mornings, the 1A cases shall be handled in Courtroom 1B (unless or until otherwise notified). Courtroom 1A will open from 8:30 am to 11:30 am for attorneys and 1:30 pm until at least 3:30 pm for the public.
- Courtroom 1B shall operate normally, except dockets shall be limited to 200 defendants effective June 7, 2021.
- Admin Court will operate normally in Room 162 (High Point) except the dockets shall be limited to 200 defendant effective June 7, 2021.

District Court

- The District Courts shall maintain normal office hours, unless otherwise notified.
- Judges will have office hours and 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.

Civil Domestic Violence Court

- Courtrooms 2A (GSO- formerly in 2B) and 3A (High Point) will operate as normal handling domestic violence *ex parte* matters (remotely) and return hearings, unless otherwise indicated. **However, Courtrooms 2A & 2B will return to regular assignments (meaning Domestic Violence cases will return to Courtroom 2B and Child Support cases will return to Courtroom 2A) on June 14, 2021.**

Civil/Domestic District Courts

- Emergency custody hearings will also be handled in courtroom 2A (formerly 2B) & 3A (High Point). They may be heard remotely. (See remote protocol for additional information or Contact Trial Coordinator's Mrs. Stephanie Wallace in Greensboro, NC or Mrs. Pat Dixon in High Point, NC for additional information). **Courtrooms 2A and 2B will return to regular assignments (meaning Domestic Violence cases will return to Courtroom 2B and Child Support cases will return to Courtroom 2A) on June 14, 2021.**
- Civil Courtrooms 2E and 3A (in GSO & HP) remain open for regular and remote hearings, and/ or assistance with courtroom 2B. The first Thursday of each term is allocated for one-hour or less hearings in Courtrooms 2E and 3A (in GSO & HP). (Contact Trial Coordinator's Mrs. Stephanie Wallace in Greensboro, NC or Mrs. Pat Dixon in High Point, NC for additional information)
- Special Settings – Please contact the Trial Court Coordinator (Mrs. Stephanie Wallace in Greensboro, NC or Mrs. Pat Dixon in High Point, NC) within ten to fourteen days to schedule remote hearing.

Criminal/Traffic District Court

- Courtroom 1C & 3C (Criminal Courts in GSO & HP) remain open for the court to dispose of cases. However, dockets shall be limited to 200 defendants, effective June 7, 2021.
- Courtroom 1D (Traffic Court) remain open for the court to dispose of cases. However, dockets shall be limited to 200 defendants, effective June 7, 2021.
- Remote Traffic Court matters are temporarily stayed until the District Attorney and Clerk's office have adequate staffing to resume it. Courtroom 1A dockets will be limited to 200 defendants, effective June 7, 2021. (Courtroom 1A will open from 8:30 am to 11:30 am for attorneys and 1:30 pm until at least 3:30 pm for the general public.)
- Courtroom 2C shall continue to operate normally for First Appearances/Bond Motions and felony court, unless otherwise notified.
- First Appearances will be held at 2:00 pm in Greensboro and High Point, North Carolina, unless otherwise notified.

Juvenile Abuse Neglect & Dependency Court/Delinquency Court

- Courtrooms are open for normal business with a limitation on in-person appearances. Cases may be heard remotely when appropriate.

Child Support Court (Cases heard in Courtroom 2B, formerly 2A)

- Child Support Court remains open for regular business with limitations on the number of persons permitted in the courtroom in Courtroom 2B (formerly held in 2A). (Currently, cases are scheduled at various times – i.e. 9:00 am, 10:00 am, 11:00 am, and 2:00 pm). Jail cases will be addressed daily unless they are addressed on the First Appearance docket. **Courtrooms 2A & 2B will return to regular assignments (meaning Domestic Violence cases will return to Courtroom 2B and Child Support cases will return to Courtroom 2A) on June 14, 2021.**

Recovery Courts

- Recovery Courts (Adult Drug Treatment Court, Mental Health Court and Juvenile DTC) will operate normally either in person or remotely in accordance with the current schedule, unless otherwise notified.

Arbitrations

- District Court Arbitrations shall continue to be heard pursuant to normal operations. Remote hearings are considered upon request.

Mediation Program

- Orientation sessions will be presented online.
- Mediations will be handled remotely, unless otherwise notified.

Judicial Waivers/Hospitalizations

- Cases will be heard as usual and shall be held remotely, if feasible.

Clean-Up Calendar (s)

- DWI Clean-Up Calendar is tentatively scheduled for June 28 to July 2, 2021. The High Point DWI Clean-Up calendar will be held in the Washington Courtroom, whereas the Greensboro Clean-Up calendar will be held in Courtroom 3A. (Contact Susan Yu in the D.A.'s Office if you have any questions.)

Failure to Appear/Orders for Arrest

- The Court shall resume operating in accordance with the normal policy regarding failures to appear and orders for arrest effective June 7, 2021.
- If a Defendant has had at least two rescheduling requests made by green slip or two orders for arrest recalled before and has failed to appear in court, the case will have to come before a District Court Judge in Court for a Motion to Recall or reschedule.

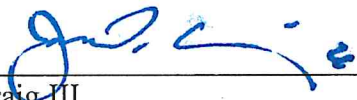
Superior Court

- Proceedings in Superior Court Criminal have changed from the previous administrative orders. Administrative matters such as motions and guilty pleas will continue to be limited due to pandemic-related restrictions; however, **daily calendars will no longer be published and we will resume the practice of weekly dockets, with calendar calls to be done at the commencement of the first day of the week that court is held. As a result, the number of persons in the courtrooms will necessarily increase to an extent and social distancing restrictions for seating in the courtrooms will be correspondingly reduced, with the continuing requirement that masks are worn at all times in the courtrooms. ADAs are cautioned not to publish calendars that might cause the number of attendees to exceed the seating capacities in Courtrooms 3C and 4C in Greensboro and 4C in High Point.**
- We have now successfully conducted approximately 12-15 jury trials in the Greensboro and High Point courthouses combined. Defense attorneys should be ready to try the cases of clients who appear on the trial calendars in the upcoming weeks unless a continuance is granted for good cause shown.

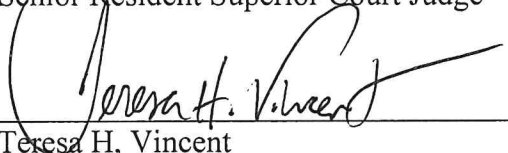
- In civil cases, we have made a transition during May from the former situation of all motions being heard remotely via WebEx. **Hearings will again be heard in the courtrooms, effective June 7, 2021. In addition, civil jury trials will resume with juries of twelve persons, also effective for the next published trial calendar in June.**

For more information pertaining to Superior Court proceedings, please refer to the announcements listed on the email pages of Trial Court Coordinators Brittany Robinson and Wendy Stuart.

This the 1st day of June, 2021.



John O. Craig III
Senior Resident Superior Court Judge



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