

The General District Courts in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District will open on Monday, May 18, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. to conduct in person proceedings including arraignments and trials. I am writing this letter to provide you with advance notice of our new operating procedures. An order specific to the General District Courts will be entered on May 12, 2020.

Our dockets numbers will be reduced dramatically to comply with the Order issued by the Supreme Court of Virginia on May 6, 2020. The courtrooms will be marked for designated seating with each person observing six feet of separation from one another. Our dockets will be segmented more precisely according to time, officer, litigant, case type and seating space to comply with the Order. Please arrive timely and prepared to proceed with your case when called. Pre-trial conferences the day of court in the courtroom with the Commonwealth Attorney and the clerk on the bench are discouraged.

Each courthouse is configured uniquely so spaces previously underutilized or utilized differently have been repurposed as waiting areas for the public. These areas will be marked with signage providing guidance and direction to the public. Social distancing will be observed. You may wish to wait with your client in that space and not in the courtroom until your case is called.

After a court case is concluded, persons having business with the clerk's office will be directed to a designated window to sign an acknowledgement form agreeing to pay fines and costs within 120 not 30 days of the date of conviction. Payment options will be explained by the clerk. The court will waive the management fee. After signing, the person will be free to leave the courthouse.

Other matters of importance include procedures for persons serving a deferred sentence or reporting to the jail on the weekends; such persons will receive a report date to be determined by the Sheriff of each locality most probably in mid-July. The Sheriff's Work Force program will remain operational in each locality; however, each Sheriff will determine the dates and times for individual defendants to report. Community service options will be operated by Court Community Corrections; however, placements may be delayed into August 2020. VASAP offices will be operational and client intakes may be performed telephonically. Issuance of a restricted license after conviction for driving under the influence will be by appointment at the clerk's office. Writs of eviction shall not issue in compliance with the CARES Act 2020 and Virginia Code Section 44-209. Garnishments and other post judgment remedies shall be governed by statute.

Until further order, the Clerk's Office in each jurisdiction will be open by appointment only.

You may wear a face covering and/or gloves inside the courtroom, but such apparel is not mandatory. The benches, chairs and counsel tables will be disinfected daily after the morning docket and again after the afternoon docket.

The novel coronavirus has impacted our lives enormously, but we must learn to live safely with the coronavirus until a vaccine is discovered. My colleagues and I will continue to work hard to ensure safe courtrooms for all of us as the General District Courts conduct business going forward.

My best to All and my sincere appreciation for your willingness to work with the Court as we plunge into these uncertain waters. It continues to be my privilege and honor to serve you and your clients.

Jacqueline F. Ward Talevi  
Chief Judge