

TARRANT COUNTY COURT AT LAW NO. 3 COURT RULES FOR REMOTE TRIALS BEFORE THE COURT

The Governor has declared a state of emergency and the Texas Supreme Court (Misc. Docket No. 20-9042) has suggested that all non-critical in person court proceedings should be suspended. However, technology and state law allows options not previously available. As such Tarrant County Court at Law No. 3 will continue to conduct Trials before the Court (TBC) 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 TBC. Any requests for a courtroom hearing will be considered but likely postponed. It is anticipated most parties will agree to a “virtual” TBC. In some instances a case is not appropriate for a virtual TBC and the Court will not offer this alternative and the case will be postponed.

PROCEDURES FOR TBC LITIGANTS:

Tarrant County Court at Law No. 3 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 proceeding. Your computer must have internet access, a video camera and a headset with a microphone. **IF AN ATTORNEY CAN ONLY PARTICIPATE VIA TELEPHONE YOU MUST COORDINATE IT THE DAY BEFORE WITH THE COURT REPORTER.**

Ensure the Court Reporter (SJKrieger@tarrantcounty.com) and Court Coordinator (MWBlake@tarrantcounty.com) have your email address not later than 4 pm the day before any TBC. Because of the importance of the record the Court Reporter, Shari, will be the “host” of all TBCs.

Exhibits must be emailed to all parties, the court reporter (email above) and the judge (MHrabal@tarrantcounty.com) not later than 4 pm the day before the TBC. The subject of the mail 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 and they will not be considered during the TBC.

If requested, Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law must be e-filed with the Clerk no less than 48 hours before the TBC and should also be emailed in .pdf format to the judge. 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.

PROCEDURES FOR TBC WITNESSES:

Witnesses **MUST** appear by video conferencing. The attorney calling the witness is responsible for ensuring that the witness has a separate video and audio feed. Attorneys should not attempt to “share” a connection with a witness. All witness should be prepared to present a valid form of identification to verify their identity to the Court over the video feed. It is the responsibility of the attorney offering the witness to ensure that all exhibits are available to the witness, including those of opposing parties.

FOR THE PUBLIC:

THE OPEN COURTS PROVISION OF TEXAS LAW ALLOWS ALL TEXANS ACCESS TO COURT PROCEEDINGS. AS SUCH ANYONE MAY CALL THE COURT COORDINATOR (817/884-1914) OR BAILIFF (817/884-1095) TO GET ACCESS CODES TO HEARINGS. 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.**