



**TRIAL COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH
DISTRICT COURT DEPARTMENT
SPRINGFIELD DIVISION**
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Clerk-Magistrate
John S. Gay

Chief Probation Officer
Daniel J. Delaney

First Justice
John M. Payne, Jr.

Justices
Robert S. Murphy, Jr.
Charles W. Groce, III
Patrick S. Sabbs
Michele A. Ouimet-Rooke
Robert T. Santaniello

Memorandum

To: All Springfield District Court Clerk's Office Employees
CC: Hon. John M. Payne, Jr., First Justice
From: John S. Gay, Clerk-Magistrate
Date: March 11, 2020
Subject: Scheduling Practices in Response to Covid-19 Virus Concerns

After consulting with First Justice Payne, and meeting with Assistant Clerks, the Office Manager and Session Clerks, I am hereby implementing the following scheduling modifications to better protect us from the increasing threat of the Covid-19 ("Corona") Virus, effective immediately.

- All Applications for Small Claims Trials will be receipted, and administratively scheduled for a "Status" Date two months hence. Clerical employees in the Small Claims Department will work with their Team Leader, Assistant Clerk William McNamara, to devise best working processes so that when the virus' threat has passed, these cases may be quickly accessed and scheduled, with the corresponding Notice of Next event sent to all litigants and their attorneys. Additionally, all Small Claims matters scheduled from March 25 through June 26, 2020 will be administratively rescheduled, with notices indicating same delivered to all parties by First Class Mail.
- All "City Ordinance" violations will be entered, and similarly held in a virtual queue (using an artificial "Status Date" as a placeholder). Civil Team Leader, Assistant Clerk John Stocks, will oversee the scheduling practice of these case-types, scheduling them for a full hearing when it is deemed safe, with notices indicating same delivered to all parties via First Class Mail.
- All new Criminal Complaints stemming from applications that do/did not involve an arrest will be scheduled as an arraignment after June 26, 2020. Specifically targeted are those cases involving minor allegations, traditionally stemming from MGL C.90. (Exempted from this are criminally more significant allegations, which will remain as formerly scheduled.) Additionally, minor criminal matters scheduled from March 25 through June 26, 2020 will be administratively rescheduled, with notices indicating same delivered to all parties via First Class Mail.

- All matters scheduled for a Civil Case Management Conference (“CMC”), currently convened in this Court by Assistant Clerks, will henceforth be conducted either by telephonic conference call, or, by video-conference. Those matters “graduating” from CMC to Trial will be given dates after September 8, 2020. Again, Assistant Clerk Stocks will coordinate this effort.
- All Civil Motor Vehicle Infraction (“CMVI”) Hearings will be initially scheduled for hearing on/after June 26, 2020. Additionally, all CMVI Hearings scheduled from March 25 through June 26, 2020 will be administratively rescheduled, with notices indicating same delivered to all parties by First Class Mail. Should the need for a further continuance be necessary (due to the prolonged threat of the virus), additional notices will be sent to alleged violators and citing police departments no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled Hearing Date. Assistant Clerks Christina Calabrese and Shelly Sankar have agreed to oversee this facet of operation.
- All Defendants released from custody (at the Springfield District Court or from the three jurisdictional police stations) will be physically completed at the safest distance possible by Assistant Clerks wearing plastic gloves. Further, the pens used to transact these recognizances will either remain at the places of detention, or, thrown away.
- We continue to explore methods by which Criminal Applications for Complaint (“Show Cause Hearings”) may be convened via existing video-conferencing technology. While it is acknowledged that these matters must be scheduled in the earliest instance, better use of current technology will reduce the number of litigants into our Court.
- Those owing monies on fees and fines will be strongly encouraged to address their financial obligation via the Trial Court’s “E-pay” system, accessed via www.masscourts.org. Additionally, Court Officers and court staff will redouble their efforts to give the printed “Payment Information” Handout (detailing how such payments may be made) to all Defendants at the time of the adjudication / resolution of their cases. Assistant Clerks Danielle Williams and Hector Zavala will oversee this effort.
- Motions to Seal will be receipted, informing Petitioners that their requests will be scheduled for hearing after the viral threat has passed. Assistant Clerks Sankar and Calabrese will oversee this process.

It is my unwavering hope that a return to more “normal” scheduling might resume very soon. But in the meantime, I feel that it is important to enact all that is possible to ensure the healthiest, most safe environment for our colleagues, and for the people we serve.