

May 16, 2020

Greetings from Kitsap County Superior Court.

ZOOM

Chief Justice Stephens' Order dated April 29, 2020 states: "Non-emergency civil matters may be continued until after June 1, 2020. However, courts should begin to hear non-emergency civil matters, so long as such matters can appropriately be conducted by telephone, video, or other remote means, or in person with strict observance of social distancing and other public health measures."

All seven of Superior Court's courtrooms are remote access capable. While we are handling our matters remotely either through Zoom or telephonically, each calendar is assigned a specific courtroom. The clerk will be handling the calendar from the assigned courtroom (your judge may be appearing remotely). All courtrooms are open should a member of the public want to observe the hearing on a monitor in the courtroom. Public observation is also available through Zoom. Remote access instructions and Zoom meeting ID numbers are posted on Kitsap County Superior Court's website: <https://www.kitsapgov.com/sc/Pages/default.aspx>.

We miss the hustle and bustle of what was business as usual at the Courthouse. Conversations in the hallway can result in agreements. There is definitely an efficiency of having everyone present, in person and in the same room. While we can get our work done using Zoom and email, it is not the same as conducting business face to face. Those that have appeared using Zoom likely have some insight about the process and undoubtedly will be happy to share what they like and dislike about the experience. If you need any help adapting to this new environment please reach out to a colleague.

The bench is still in the learning process as well. The transition has not been seamless. But we are fortunate to have clerks and court administration staff that work extremely hard. They have initiated and adapted to major changes being made (seemingly overnight) regarding how we conduct business. The bench is beyond grateful.

COURTROOM 268

Courtroom 268 (our smallest courtroom) is being used for hearings if a party appears in person. Courtroom 268 is linked via Zoom to Courtroom 206 (Commissioner Clucas' courtroom) but can also be linked to our other courtrooms. Courtroom 206 is where we get most of the walk-in traffic. We can direct a party who appears in person to go to Courtroom 268 when the case is called. Like you, they will be appearing before the judicial officer over the Zoom platform. As previously stated, we are mindful of procedural fairness issues and want to make sure hearings are conducted on a level playing field.

FOOT TRAFFIC IN THE COURTHOUSE

Foot traffic in the Courthouse has increased since we have moved back to our regular calendars. This was expected. But it continues to be relatively low and manageable at this time. Those that do appear in person are instructed on how to access court remotely the next time they have a hearing. Most are pleased to know that their matter can be heard without having to physically come to the Courthouse. Please continue to spread the word in your communications with the other side.

JURY TRIAL WORK GROUP

Chief Justice Stephens has ordered jury trials postponed until at least July 6th. The first meeting of the Jury Trial Work Group will be Wednesday, May 20th at 12:15 p.m. Please appear remotely using Zoom. If you do not want to use Zoom, please provide the Team Captain of your practice area a good phone number that we can reach you at.

The focus of our discussion will be how to safely reengage the jury trial process, from initial check-in and

orientation with Clerk's Office through verdict, while complying with critical constitutional provisions, statutes and court rules. Practitioners, judges, clerks and court staff from all of our local courts are invited to participate. This includes those whose primary area of practice may not include jury trials. Our conversations could evolve into topics that would also apply to bench trials (such as using exhibits with witnesses who may be appearing via Zoom, how a witness wearing a recommended face covering might interfere with the fact-finder's assessment of demeanor, etc.).

Here is the Zoom access information for the meeting:

Topic: Jury Trial Work Group

Time: May 20, 2020 12:15 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84984771026>

Dial In for Audio Only: (253) 215-8782 / Meeting ID: 849 8477 1026

Please bring your ideas and recommendations. The bench looks forward to the conversation.

More anon, Kevin

Kevin Hull

Presiding Judge

Kitsap County Superior Court