

MEMORANDUM

To: All Attorneys Practicing in the Fifteenth Circuit Family Court
From: Jan B. Bromell Holmes
Subject: WebEx Remote Hearings
Date: April 1, 2020

Greetings to Everyone:

As you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted the way we operate our court proceedings as well as our lives in general. Over the past few weeks, Chief Justice Donald W. Beatty, has sought to ensure that the judiciary “remains open for business”. It is our goal to hear and dispose of cases as well as dispense justice as efficiently and proficiently as we can at this particular time, given certain limitations.

As Chief Administrative Judge for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, I am pleased to inform you that we are authorized to conduct hearings remotely via WebEx. This is a trial period and if all goes well, as we anticipate, we will add additional type hearings (i.e. temporary hearings, etc.) other than what is specified in this memo to WebEx/Video Conferencing.

Beginning April 8, 2020, the following matters may be scheduled for hearings:

1. Uncontested divorces. The moving party shall attend. The non-moving party may appear by affidavit as you generally are accustomed by submission of Non-Appearance Affidavit. If financial conditions of the parties are before the Court, then in compliance with Rule 20 of the Family Court Rules, financial declarations shall be filed and submitted to the Court.
2. Approval of Agreements. Submit the agreement along with your hearing request so that the Court reviews same prior to the scheduled hearing. If financial conditions of the parties are before the Court, then in compliance with Rule 20 of the Family Court Rules, financial declarations shall be filed and submitted to the Court. Please note that the parties don't have liberty to waive compliance with this rule. It is the Court's responsibility to determine the reasonableness and fairness of the agreement based on the parties' financial condition.
3. Uncontested Adoptions.

The emergencies will continue to be heard as scheduled. The above type cases will be heard in addition to the emergency matters designated by order of Chief Justice Donald W. Beatty previously provided to you.

The following are the guidelines of which we will adhere in the Fifteenth Circuit with respect to WebEx/Video Conferencing.

REQUESTING WEBEX HEARINGS:

Your hearing request shall be sent in **WORD** format. We will only schedule uncontested hearings where all parties (including self-represented litigants and attorneys agree to participate in the hearing via WebEx. Please note that no consent is required for parties that appear by affidavit of whom have waived their appearance. This means that you should not send any request for a hearing to be scheduled via WebEx until you have discussed it with all attorneys of record and all pro se parties **AND RECEIVED THEIR CONSENT TO REQUEST THE HEARING.**

WE ARE ONLY ACCEPTING HEARING REQUESTS FOR MATTERS THAT WERE SCHEDULED FROM MARCH 16, 2020 THROUGH MAY 1, 2020. SO PLEASE REFRAIN FROM SENDING IN ANY NEW REQUEST AS THEY WILL NOT BE SCHEDULED. PLEASE NOTE THE ORIGINAL HEARING DATE ON YOUR REQUEST TO EXPEDITE SCHEDULING.

I WILL CONTACT YOU WHEN WE WILL BEGIN SCHEDULING NEW MATTERS.

In Georgetown:

If you wish to request a hearing via WebEx, you need to email the request to the Scheduling Clerk, Mrs. Cindy Howard at choward@gtcounty.org and my Administrative Assistant, Cindy Hardy at jholmessc@sccourts.org . Please copy all attorneys of record and all pro se parties.

In Horry:

If you wish to request a hearing via WebEx, you need to email the request to the Scheduling Clerk, Krystle Church (churchk@HorryCounty.org) and my Administrative Assistant, Cindy Hardy at jholmessc@sccourts.org. Please copy all attorneys of record and all pro se parties.

WebEx requires an email address for inclusion in the video conference. So please note that your request includes the names and email addresses of all participants. If your client or your witness will be at a separate location from you, then their name and email

address must be included in the request. The Court will generate the evite to the hearing, and can only include those people that were listed on your request. This will require you to communicate with opposing counsel or the opposing pro se party **prior** to sending the request to ensure everyone is correctly listed.

SCHEDULED HEARING TIME:

Please note that hearings will be set in 30 minute intervals. In addition, please be on time for your hearing or risk having to request a new hearing date and time, of which you will **NOT** receive priority. The process moves slower, so we can't allow one attorney or party to frustrate the schedule.

INSTALLATION OF SOFTWARE:

Prior to the hearing date, it will be necessary for participants to have access to WebEx which must be downloaded to the electronic devices of the Participants. A witness may use the same electronic device as a litigant. Go to <https://www.webex.com/>

Please note that this is a new undertaking for us all and there will be bumps in the road. We are committed to working through this united and on one accord: for we are truly in this thing together. Be encouraged and stay safe!

Jan B. Bromell Holmes
Chief Administrative Judge
Fifteenth Judicial Circuit Family Court