

**IN THE MORROW COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT
MORROW COUNTY, OHIO**

**IN RE: TEMPORARY ORDER IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY**

JOURNAL ENTRY

The Court makes the following Findings of Fact:

1. On March 9, 2020, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine issued Executive Order 2020-01D “Declaring a State of Emergency” in response to the growing COVID-19 public health emergency.
2. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 to be a global “pandemic” requiring “urgent and aggressive action” to control the spread of the virus.
3. In response to this public health emergency, the Morrow County Municipal Court must take measures to minimize the number of individuals that travel to the courthouse in the coming weeks.
4. A modification of the Morrow County Municipal Court’s schedule and daily operations is needed to protect the public while maintaining essential court functions and protecting the rights of all individuals subject to the authority of the Court.

Therefore, it is hereby ORDERED:

1. Effective immediately, access to the courtroom for all appearances and hearings are limited to attorneys, defendants, victims, victim’s advocates, parties, witnesses, jurors, and the media. Anyone making payments to the court shall be granted limited access to the lobby. However, individuals are strongly encouraged to make payments online, over the phone and via mail. *See Page 2, Numbers 1 and 2.*
2. The Court will continue to see the majority of prisoners via video conferencing unless the right to confrontation or other Constitutional rights require appearance in person.
3. Criminal and traffic arraignments will proceed as scheduled with the use of social distancing and cleaning efforts to minimize health risks to those appearing.
4. Those individuals charged with a minor misdemeanor drug possession or drug paraphernalia charge are no longer required to appear for an initial appearance if they choose to pay the citation as a waiver.

5. Criminal pretrial conferences shall be conducted by phone. Criminal final pretrial conferences will also be conducted by phone unless the Court is advised in advance that a plea agreement has been reached and proper victim notification has occurred. Counsel and parties are still required to appear in person for pre-jury trial pretrial conferences so that efforts can be taken to negotiate a resolution short of a jury trial.
6. Civil pretrial, status, and settlement conferences shall be conducted by phone. Hearings regarding motions for default judgment and summary judgment will be non-oral only. As such, parties shall be given the opportunity to file supplemental information they want considered by the Court on or before the scheduled hearing date and time. Personal appearance is not required and will not be permitted.
7. The performance of weddings in the Morrow County Municipal Court is indefinitely suspended.
8. The public health emergency may be considered to be a finding of “just cause” for continuances deemed necessary on a case-by-case basis.

The above-stated measures will significantly reduce the number of individuals appearing in court. Defendants in criminal/traffic cases can also take steps to eliminate or postpone their next court appearance. **Defendants are hereby advised of the following:**

1. **Online payments:** The court accepts online payments through its website at <https://morrowcountymunict.org>. The Court encourages individuals to make online payments when possible. Individuals who do not want to contest a waivable citation can conclude their case by paying their fine online. No court appearance is necessary.
2. **Telephonic payments:** The court accepts payments via phone for payment plan obligations. Individuals may call (419) 947-5045 ext. 1.
3. **Written Appearance:** Defendants who would like to contest their case can avoid coming to the courthouse for their initial appearance by filing a not guilty plea prior to their court date. Defendants can download a Not Guilty Plea Form from the Court’s website, complete it, and file it with the court prior to their initial appearance date. The not guilty plea form also gives defendants the option to waive their right to a speedy trial and permit the Court to set their next court date sometime in the future. *See Number 5 below for further instructions.*
4. **Speedy Trial Waiver:** Any defendant that previously demanded a speedy trial but now wants to continue his/her pretrial or trial can download a Motion to Continue form from the Court’s website, complete it, and file it with the court. *See Number 5 below for further instructions.*

5. **Filing Documents:** While the Court will continue to accept filings at the window, it also accepts filing by email, facsimile, and mail.

- a. The Court's email address is info@morrowcountymunict.org.
- b. The Court's facsimile number is (419) 946-4070.
- c. The Court's mailing address is 48 East High Street, Room A, Mt. Gilead, Ohio. 43338.

If possible, the Court encourages individuals to file documents by email, facsimile, or by mail instead of filing at the window.

The Court is continuously assessing the situation to determine if additional precautions are necessary.

This Temporary Order shall remain in effect until further order of the Court.

SO ORDERED.



Judge Jenifer Murphy Burnaugh

DATE: March 18, 2020

FILED
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MORROW COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT
MT. GILEAD, OH 43338