



CITY OF MILWAUKEE MUNICIPAL COURT

May 4, 2020

Derek C. Mosley, Presiding Judge
Branch 2

Valarie A. Hill, Judge
Branch 1

Phillip M. Chavez, Judge
Branch 3

Sheldyn M. Himle
Chief Court Administrator

Jane E.T. Islo
Assistant Court Administrator

Alderman Michael Murphy
Finance & Personnel Committee, Chair
City Hall
200 E. Wells Street
Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Alderman Murphy:

Municipal Court currently remains closed to the public, having shutdown public facing operations on March 16. As an operation that works with hundreds of people coming in for direct services every day, we felt this was the best way to manage public safety concerns.

The immediate result of this was thousands of cases being rescheduled to later appearance dates. With the governor's extension of the Safer at Home order, we had to reschedule another set of cases falling within that extended timeline. Upon suspending services, we also suspended the enforcement of any alternative sentences. Therefore, as due dates passed no one had a new warrant or driver's license suspension issued while the Court was closed. Payments can and are still being made on some of these cases.

Since March 17, fifteen of the Court's 25 administrative employees have been working full-time via remote access with some limited hours spent at the Court. The remaining 10 employees have been working part-time at the Court, on a rotational basis, since that work cannot be done from a remote location.

All Court employees remain connected via email. On an on-going basis, staff answers questions from the public, directs people to the online payment portal and manages correspondence that comes in via email. We have also been managing records requests, processing mail, updating cases, managing all accounting functions, working to successfully transition collections to the new vendor, working with other state, county and City staff to enable the continuance of all essential services.

We continue to have concerns about bringing the public into the Court for services. These concerns have led us to consider how the Court might offer hearings via an online platform. Having had a workplace assessment done by Lindor Schmidt, we are now working toward making such an attempt. Understanding the time needed to put this together and to test it, before we provide such an option, we have put together a staffing plan for the interim.

The Court's current proposal is to furlough 10 employees while reducing the hours of another nine, leaving six people working full-time. The Court plans to open the phones during the week of June 1, in preparation for online hearings as soon as June 15. This would necessitate bringing at least two people on reduced hours back to full-time. Depending on the volume of calls, we may need to consider bringing others back at that time.

We know that people are still trying to reach out to the Court: phone logs show an average of a hundred calls coming in daily (even on weekends) and people on the security detail at the entrance to the Court report a handful of people coming in each day, looking for assistance or to make payments.

Long-term, the current plan is to bring all staff back as soon as possible after the Safer at Home order expires, hopefully no later than July 27.

Please let me know if I can answer any follow-up questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Sheldyn M. Himle
Chief Court Administrator
Milwaukee Municipal Court

Copy: Judge Derek C. Mosley
Judge Valarie A. Hill
Judge Phillip M. Chavez
Jane E.T. Islo