

IN THE COMMON PLEAS OF RICHLAND COUNTY, OHIO
GENERAL DIVISION

RICHLAND COUNTY,
CLERK OF COURTS
FILED
2020 MAR 20 A 10:30

IN THE MATTER OF THE COVID-19
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

:
:
:
:
:
:

LINDA H. FRARY
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
CLERK OF COURTS

20 MIS 30

The Judges of the Richland County Court of Common Pleas, General Division, make the following findings:

1. On March 9, 2020, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine issued Executive Order 2020-01D declaring a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 (also known as “the coronavirus”) pandemic.
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. On March 13, 2020, the Richland County Commissioners urged Richland County agencies to embrace social distancing and accessing public services remotely when possible.
4. On March 18, 2020, the Office of Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost issued Opinion No. 2020-002 stating that “[c]ourts may suspend jury trials to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, and they may do so consistent with state and federal speedy-trial obligations.”

Based on these findings, the Richland County Common Pleas Court, finds it necessary to amend its Local Rules and modify its policies to accomplish two overarching goals: (1) protect its employees, litigants, and the community as a whole and (2) administer justice and protect individuals’ constitutional and statutory rights. Therefore, it is hereby ORDERED that:


1. The Richland County Common Pleas Court, General Division, Local Rules may be temporarily modified to allow Court flexibility, within Constitutional limits, in response to the public health emergency.
2. The Richland County Common Pleas Court, General Division policies may be temporarily adjusted to maintain essential court operations.
3. The Richland County Common Pleas Court General Division has determined the COVID-19 public health emergency is a good cause for continuances in accordance with O.R.C. 2945.72(H) and Attorney General Yost's Opinion 2020-002.
4. The Court finds that holding jury trials at this time would likely spread the COVID-19 virus in the community. Accordingly, all jury trials, civil or criminal, are hereby suspended to a date after May 1, 2020, however, parties may proceed with a bench trial. The Court will set specific dates by individual entries for cases in which the parties assert their right to a jury trial.
5. All parties are ORDERED to continue with good faith efforts to resolve all cases and discovery shall continue as normal.
6. Petit jurors summoned for jury duty from March 16, 2020 to May 1, 2020 are not required to report for jury service.
7. Parties and/or counsel to any action who are exhibiting COVID symptoms should not appear in person. Rather they should request a continuance through counsel or for individuals without an attorney, please contact the Court at 419-774-5570.
8. Court proceedings are open to the public. Victims, defendants and all parties are permitted by law to have friends, family, and the press present for these proceedings. However, because of the State of Emergency, it is appropriate and strongly encouraged that counsel discourage the appearance in court of all nonessential observers. Any non-

party exhibiting signs of illness should not appear in person are subject to being excluded or removed from the courthouse.

9. All specialized dockets within this Court are continued until further notice.
10. The Richland County Common Pleas Court General Division hereby states that the filing of court documents, except for new petitions for civil stalking protection orders which must be filed in person, can be done via mail, fax or e-mail. Please contact the Richland County Clerk of Courts at 419-774-8969 to request permission to fax or email file. Documents will be time-stamped in accordance with Local Rule 15.02(H).
11. The Richland County Common Pleas Court General Division authorizes and encourages the use of audiovisual devices and technologies when possible for civil scheduling conferences and pretrials, as well as, arraignments, bond hearings, change of pleas and sentencings for individuals in the custody of the Richland County Jail. All other events and proceedings will be considered on a case by case basis.
12. Proceedings in Aid and all debtor exams are hereby stayed until after May 30, 2020.
13. The Court hereby stays the execution of Decrees of Foreclosure and Orders of Sale until after May 30, 2020 unless the property has already been vacated by the defendant(s) or occupant(s).
14. Attorney/client visitations for individuals in custody in the Richland County Jail will be done using the video visitation stations in the lobby of the jail. The recording function of the video visitation stations has been disabled and will remain so until it has been determined that regular visitations can be resumed.
15. The Richland County Common Pleas Court General Division will have the lawful authority, within constitutional limits, to do or direct to be done all things necessary to

ensure the orderly and efficient administration of justice and public safety for the duration of the declared state of emergency.

It is so **ORDERED**.



Judge Brent N. Robinson, General Division



Judge Phillip S. Naumoff, General Division