

STEUBENVILLE MUNICIPAL COURT
ORDER 2020-3 Date: March 24, 2020
TEMPORARY ORDER IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19
(CORONAVIRUS) PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Steubenville Municipal 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 crisis.
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 11, 2020 the first “community transfer” positive case of COVID-19 in the State of Ohio was confirmed to be in Stark County. Since that time the virus has spread throughout Ohio and there have been confirmed cases of death.
4. Subsequently, more restrictive Orders have been issued by the Governor, including stay at home orders.
5. The Chief Justice has further given guidance to courts throughout the State in terms of daily operation during the course of this pandemic.
6. On March 17, 2020 this Court issued Order 2020-2 in response to directives that were in place at that time. This Order supersedes that Order.

Based upon these Findings of Fact, the Steubenville Municipal Court has developed a continuum of flexible responses in case the public health crisis escalates even further. The continuum of responses is intended to protect public health, to maintain essential court functions, and to continue to protect the rights of all individuals subject to the authority of the Court.

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

1. The Local Rules of Court may be temporarily adapted to allow Court flexibility, within Constitutional limits, in response to the public health emergency, otherwise, the Court will continue to be fully operational and will follow its’ Local Rules.
2. Security policies may be temporarily amended or supplemented to protect public health while maintaining essential court functions.
3. The Court authorizes the use of audiovisual devices and technologies for all actions and proceedings.
4. The public health emergency may be considered to be a finding of “just cause” for continuances deemed necessary by assigned Judges and Magistrates on a case-by-case basis.

5. The Court will have the lawful authority, within constitutional limits, to do and direct to be done all things necessary to ensure the orderly and efficient administration of justice for the duration of the declared public health emergency.
6. The Court and common areas will be continually disinfected. The only individuals permitted to be inside of the Municipal Court Complex are staff, attorneys, defendants, and litigants who may appear. Use of mail, phone, text messaging, fax, and e-mail is encouraged.
7. The Court will make every effort to avoid hearings of any kind. All appearances are to be by video conferencing.
8. The community service program has been suspended until further order.
9. Probationers are to phone their probation officer and need not appear.
10. Those appearing to pay unpaid fines and costs are encouraged to pay on-line.
11. All weekly afternoon Reviews scheduled the next two weeks are rescheduled ninety days out. Future Reviews may likewise be extended as deemed necessary in the interest of public health.
12. Any attorney having a criminal case will be called by phone in advance and their case continued.
13. All civil cases including small claims and eviction proceedings will be continued not less than three weeks and may be extended longer if necessary.
14. The court has been very liberal in granting continuances. Those who fail to appear for a criminal offense will have their case rescheduled. Minor misdemeanor traffic shall continue to pay in accordance with the Court's schedule and no forfeiture will issue against any individual who phones the Court and requests a continuance in advance of their scheduled date. Recognizance shall be the preferred method of bond unless a violent offense. Issuance of Arrest Warrants shall be avoided at all costs unless absolutely necessary.
15. There will be no trials of any kind pending further order of Court.
16. Staff has been reduced and shall continue to rotate on a weekly basis as directed by the Judge. Court hours have been and will continue to be reduced. All daily mail shall be file stamped but need not be processed the same day.
17. The Court continues to make every effort to reduce foot traffic inside of the Municipal Complex and shall continue to make any orders necessary to protect the health and safety of the public.

This "Temporary Order" shall be posted in the Clerk's office and display case outside of the Courtroom.

So Ordered

John J. Mascio, Judge

