

**GUIDELINES FOR ZOOM HEARINGS** 2020 APR 31 PM 1:37

The Governor of the State of Texas has declared a state of disaster affecting all Texas counties. The Texas Supreme Court has prohibited courts from conducting non-essential proceedings in person at least until May 1, 2020. All persons are invited to appear at hearings remotely. It is expected that effective videoconferencing will be available by April 1.

Therefore, this Court has suspended all non-essential proceedings in person until at least May 1, 2020. The Court makes the following orders regarding appearances by videoconferencing:

1. Each person (attorney, staff, witness) appearing at a videoconference hearing must have access to a computer or other device capable of supporting Zoom. Zoom supports Windows, Mac, Android, and iOS platforms. The Court has a premium Zoom license and can host meetings of up to 300 participants and unlimited time period. All other users can use the basic Zoom license, available from Zoom at no cost.
2. All videoconference court proceedings will be broadcast over the Court's YouTube channel. Notice of the Court's videoconference docket will be posted on the Court's website and the Smith County website.

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXAlf9gGOJvHsuU3h-TGWqg?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXAlf9gGOJvHsuU3h-TGWqg?view_as=subscriber)

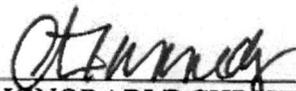
The Texas Supreme Court has determined that this procedure satisfies the Open Courts Provision of the Texas Constitution.

3. The Court Reporter will be present by Zoom.
4. No recording of the hearings is permitted.
5. Witnesses will be sworn by the Court, without the need for a notary. The Supreme Court has suspended certain procedural rules, such as those restricting remote testimony.
6. If "The Rule" is invoked, the Court will put the witnesses in Zoom breakout rooms until they are called to testify.
7. Witnesses may not be physically present with the attorneys or parties. No communication between attorneys, witnesses, and parties is permitted during the hearing, whether in person, by chat, or other communication methods.
8. Prior to the scheduled hearing, the Court will send an email inviting all attorneys, witnesses, and staff to the Zoom meeting.
9. Any exhibits should be efiled with the District Clerk 24 hours before the scheduled hearing. Attorneys are instructed to confer regarding the admission of exhibits and notify the Court of any agreements as to admissibility.

**ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR ZOOM HEARINGS:**

1. If you are not currently speaking, mute your own zoom account.
2. Also, as discussed above, multiple users should not be in the same room. This will prevent echoing on the equipment.
3. Please remember to speak one at a time. Also, Zoom conferencing works best when there is a pause between speakers. So, please wait a brief moment before speaking after someone else.

SIGNED April 1, 2020

  
HONORABLE CHRISTI KENNEDY  
114TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT