

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF DELAWARE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

IN RE: 32nd JUDICIAL DISTRICT : PA SUPREME COURT NO. 30 MM 2020
: :
Civil Section Cancelations and :
Revised Scheduling Protocols : DELAWARE COUNTY NO. 5120-17
*Extended*¹ :

EMERGENCY ORDER EXTENSION – CIVIL SECTION

AND NOW, this 7th day of April, 2020, this court having declared in the 32nd judicial district (Delaware County) a judicial emergency and more recently extended that emergent declaration pursuant to such an order of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court authorizing the same,² as well as Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(B)(1)(2), and this court thus still having those authorities detailed under Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(B)(2)(a-s), it is hereby **ORDERED** and **DECREED** in consultation with the civil liaison judge that the following civil section cancelations and/or revised scheduling protocols **SHALL** become **EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY** and continue through and including **APRIL 30, 2020**.³

ALL calculations for the purposes of time computation relevant to court cases or other judicial business, as well as time deadlines, are within this judicial district (32nd) **SUSPENDED**, subject to applicable constitutional restrictions, if any.⁴

Counsel and **ALL** other interested parties **SHALL** be reminded that Delaware County's civil, nonfamily, e-filing system remains operational and allows, *inter alia*, for the lodging and docketing of wide ranging pleadings as further detailed by Delaware County Local Rule 205.4⁵ related to electronic filing and service of legal papers.

ALL civil arbitration hearings listed between the present and April 30, 2020, **SHALL** be **CONTINUED** and rescheduled by the Civil Court Administrator's Office no less than ninety (90) and no more than one hundred twenty (120) days subsequent to April 30, 2020.

ALL civil bench trials and/or hearings otherwise previously scheduled by an assigned judge and set between the present through April 30, 2020, **SHALL** be **CONTINUED** and rescheduled by the designated jurist consistent with his or her calendar, unless the presiding judge determines it appropriate that a given hearing may proceed through means of advanced communication technology, subject to applicable constitutional limitations, if any.⁶

ALL matters comprising the civil miscellaneous list of April 21, 2020, **SHALL** be **CONTINUED** and **ANY** such cases rescheduled by the Civil Court Administrator's Office in a staggered manner on those civil miscellaneous lists already set three (3) to four (4) months subsequent.⁷

ALL civil pretrial conferences set between the present and April 30, 2020, **SHALL** be held via video conferencing and/or telephonically, or continued by the assigned judge to a subsequent date where the pretrial conference can be conducted by all involved through advanced technological means, including but not limited to such an of-record proceeding, or should in the alternative the presiding judge believe a given civil pretrial conference must be held in person, then the same **SHALL** be relisted once the present judicial emergency has abated.⁸

The assigned judge where he or she believes is appropriate and proper as part of these pretrial conferences and/or otherwise will encourage the litigants through the lawyers to participate in binding arbitration with such mediation costs shared as the parties may agree.

ALL civil emergency filings from the present through April 30, 2020, **SHALL** consistent with existing administrative protocols be assigned to a civil section judge on a rotational basis as directed by the civil liaison. The designated civil jurist on review of any such emergent pleading will schedule those next proceedings as he or she believes to be appropriate. If the reviewing judge determines the salient circumstances are such that a hearing must be held before April 30, 2020, those proceedings to the extent possible **SHALL** be conducted via advanced communication technology, subject to applicable constitutional restrictions, if any.⁹ In the event the presiding judge determines an in-person emergency hearing must be conducted prior to April 30, 2020, the scheduling of the same is to be coordinated through both the civil liaison judge and district court administrator to assure there is “staggered” scheduling allowing for as best as possible in that area of the courthouse and the particular courtroom recommended “social distancing.”¹⁰

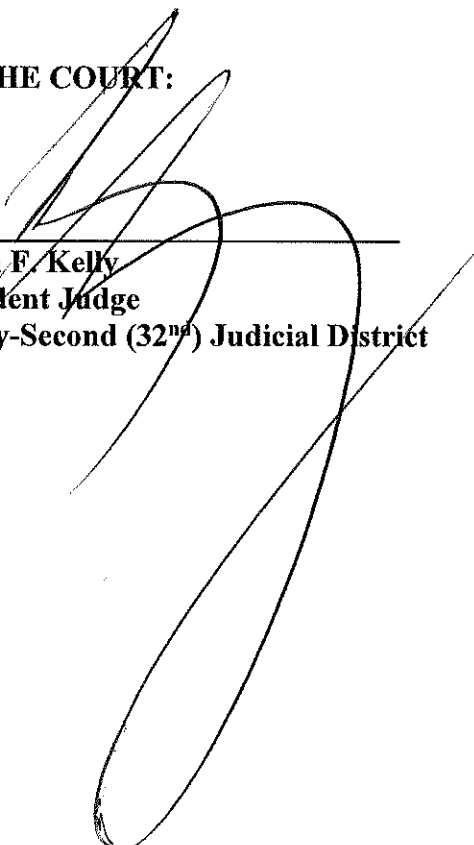
ALL cases currently scheduled for conciliator mediation conferences before the Honorable Charles B. Burr, II (retired) between the present and April 30, 2020, **SHALL** be **CONTINUED** and relisted no less than sixty (60) and no more than one hundred twenty (120) days subsequent consistent with retired Judge Burr’s calendar. Retired Judge Burr as his availability allows may in the interim conduct telephonic conciliatory mediation conferences and assuming such schedulings **ALL** involved counsel are directed to meaningfully participate.

That directed above as subsequent material circumstances warrant and/or it otherwise believes appropriate may be revisited by this court and modified to meet the evolving concerns presented by the ongoing COVID-19 public health crisis.

To the extent possible and practical under the material circumstances, notice of this order has been and/or will promptly be posted about the Delaware County courthouse, including but

not limited to the complex's entry doors, the Delaware County Office of Judicial Support, the Court Administrator's Office of Delaware County, the Criminal Court Administrator's Office, the court's website, all magisterial district court facilities within Delaware County, the Delaware County Bar Association's website, and submitted to the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts ("AOPC") for posting on the Commonwealth's Unified Judicial System's website per Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(C)(5).¹¹

BY THE COURT:



Kevin F. Kelly
President Judge
Thirty-Second (32nd) Judicial District

¹ See Emergency Order – Civil Section dated March 18, 2020.

² See Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(B)(1)(2). See also Orders dated March 16, 2020, pp. 1-2; March 18, 2020, pp. 1-3; March 24, 2020; and April 1, 2020, pp. 1-3 – Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Nos. 531 and 532 Judicial Administration Docket; Emergency Declaration dated March 17, 2020; and Emergency Declaration Extension dated April 2, 2020.

³ See Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(B)(2)(d)(h)(i)(k)(l)(q).

⁴ See Orders dated March 16, 2020, p. 2; March 18, 2020, p. 4; and April 1, 2020, p. 3 – Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Nos. 531 and 532 Judicial Administration Docket. See also Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(B)(2)(l)(m).

⁵ A copy of Delaware County Local Rule 205.4 is attached and wholly incorporated by reference.

⁶ See Orders dated March 16, 2020, pp. 2-3; March 18, 2020, pp. 4, 6-7; and April 1, 2020, pp. 4-5 – Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Nos. 531 and 532 Judicial Administration Docket. See also Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(B)(2)(d)(h)(i)(q).

⁷ See Orders dated March 16, 2020; March 18, 2020; and April 1, 2020 – Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Nos. 531 and 532 Judicial Administration Docket. See also Emergency Declaration dated March 17, 2020; Emergency Declaration Extension dated April 2, 2020; and Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(B)(2)(d)(h)(q).

⁸ See Orders dated March 16, 2020, p. 2; March 18, 2020, pp. 4, 6-7; and April 1, 2020, pp. 4-5 – Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Nos. 531 and 532 Judicial Administration Docket. See also Emergency Declaration dated March 17, 2020; Emergency Declaration Extension dated April 2, 2020; and Pa.R.J.A. No. 1952(B)(2)(d)(h)(q).

⁹ See Orders dated March 16, 2020, p. 2; March 18, 2020, pp. 4, 6-7; and April 1, 2020, pp. 4-5 – Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Nos. 531 and 532 Judicial Administration Docket.

¹⁰ See Orders dated March 16, 2020, p. 2; March 18, 2020, pp. 4, 6-7; and April 1, 2020, pp. 4-5 – Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Nos. 531 and 532 Judicial Administration Docket.

¹¹ See Orders dated March 16, 2020, p. 2 and April 1, 2020, pp. 2-3 – Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Nos. 531 and 532 Judicial Administration Docket.

DELAWARE COUNTY LOCAL RULE 205.4

(a) (1) Commencement

- (i) On the commencement date, all parties may electronically file all “legal papers” as defined in Pa.R.C.P. No. 205.4 (a)(2), with the Office of Judicial Support through Delaware County’s Electronic Filing system as more specifically provided in Pennsylvania Rule of Civil Procedure No. 205.4 and Delaware County Civil Rule 205.4,
- (ii) Ninety (90) days from the commencement date, parties shall electronically file all “legal papers” as defined in Pa.R.C.P. No. 205.4 (a)(2), with the Office of Judicial Support through Delaware County’s Electronic Filing system as more specifically provided in Pennsylvania Rule of Civil Procedure No. 205.4 and Delaware County Civil Rule 205.4.

Explanatory Note: The term “legal paper” as defined in Pa.R.C.P. No. 205.4(a)(2) encompasses all pleadings and all other papers filed with the Office of Judicial Support – including exhibits and attachments -even if the legal papers are not adversarial in nature and do not require the non-filing party or parties to respond.

(2) As used in this rule the following words shall have the following meanings:

CMS (Case Management System): A Court case management system manages the receipt, processing, storage and retrieval of data associated with a case and performs actions on the data.

Electronic Filing (E-Filing): The electronic transmission, acceptance and processing of a filing. A submission consists of data, one or more documents, and/or images. The definition of electronic filing does not apply to facsimile or e-mail.

Electronic Service (E-Service): The electronic transmission of an original document to all other electronically-registered case participants via the electronic filing system. Upon the completion of any transmission to the electronic filing system, an electronic receipt shall be issued to the sender acknowledging receipt by the electronic filing system.

EFS : Delaware County Electronic Filing System.

(b) (1) Authorized Electronic Format of Legal Papers Electronically Filed

All legal papers shall be filed in a portable document format (“pdf”). A legal paper presented for filing in hard copy or in a format other than portable document format shall be converted to a portable document format and maintained by the Office of Judicial Support pursuant to Pa. R.C.P. 205.4 (b)(1)

- (2) This Rule shall not apply to legal papers related to actions in Support as defined in Pa.R.C.P. 1910.1 through 1910.50 and 1930.1 through 1940.9, Custody, Partial Custody and Visitation of Minor Children under Pa. R.C.P. 1951.1, Special Relief under Pa. R.C.P. 1913.13 or Actions for Divorce or for the Annulments of Marriage under Pa. R.C.P. 1920.1; Protection from Abuse under Pa. R. C. P. 1901.3; Protection of Victims of Sexual Violence or Intimidation under Pa. R.C.P 1951; Petition for Writ of Seizure pursuant to Pa. R. C. P. 1075; Petition to Postpone Sheriff’s Sale Pa.R.C.P. 3132; Petition to Appoint a Constable. ; Claim of Exemption pursuant to Pa.R.C.P. 3123.1; Appeal from Denial of Right to Know Request under Pa.R.J. A. 509. This rule shall also not apply to certified zoning records which

include blueprints and/or plot plans under Delaware County Local Rule 27. *Motions or petitions seeking relief in emergency situations, injunctive relief or stay of proceedings shall not be filed through the EFS system but shall be taken to the Office of Judicial Support to be time-stamped, processed, and docketed and then brought by the party seeking the emergency relief or the stay of proceedings to the Court Administrator for reference to the appropriate judge.*

(2) Website. Access to the Website

- (i) Website. All legal papers shall be filed electronically through Delaware County's Electronic Filing system Electronic Filing system "EFS" which shall be accessible through the County of Delaware website <http://www.co.delaware.pa.us/ojs/efile.html> or at such other website as may be designated from time to time.
- (ii) Use of the EFS shall be in accordance with the local rule and instructions contained on the website.
- (iii) Access to the Website. To obtain access to the Delaware County Electronic Filing System, counsel and self-represented litigant must apply for and receive a User Name and Password.
- (iv) Registered users shall be individuals, and not law firms, agencies, corporations nor other groups.
- (v) User access may be suspended to prevent fraud, to maintain security of the system and network, to prevent an unacceptable level of congestion, or to prevent a disruption to the EFS or another user.

(d) (1) Payment of Filing Fees under the EFS system.

- (i) The Office of Judicial Support will accept for payment of all filing fees through PayPal.
- (ii) The Office of Judicial Support will not accept advance deposits for future filings.

(e) Reserved

(f) (1) Filing Status Messages

- (i) Upon receipt of the electronic document, the Office of Judicial Support shall provide the filing party with an acknowledgment, which includes the date and time the document was received by the Delaware County Electronic Filing system.
- (ii) After review of the electronic document, the Office of Judicial Support shall provide the filing party with e-mail notification, or notification on the Delaware County Electronic Filing System, that the document has been accepted for filing ("filed") or refused and not accepted for filing.

(2) Official Record

- (i) When an electronic document is accepted, the document is the official record.

(3) Signatures and Verifications

- (i) The electronic filing of documents utilizing the issued User Name and Password as provided by this rule and Pa.R.C.P. No. 205.4, constitutes the party's signature on electronic documents as provided by Pa.R.C.P. No. 1023.1 and, if the filing party is an attorney, constitutes a certification of authorization to file it as provided in Pa.R.C.P. No. 205.1.
- (ii) The electronic document filed by a party must include a signature block, and the name of the filer under whose User Name and Password the document is submitted. The document may be submitted with the filer's scanned signature or "/s/" and the filer's name typed in the space where the signature would otherwise appear on the document.
- (iii) If an attorney is the filing party, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Attorney Identification number must be included under the signature line. The correct format for an attorney signature is as follows:

/s/ Attorney name
Pa Supreme Court ID#
Attorney for (Plaintiff/Defendant) XYZ Corporation
ABC Law Firm
ADDRESS
TELEPHONE NUMBER
FAX NUMBER - (FAX)
E-MAIL ADDRESS

- (iv) An authorized electronic filer must not allow their user name and password to be used by anyone other than an agent who is authorized by the electronic filer.
- (v) Electronic filers shall notify the Office of Judicial Support's Help Desk immediately if there has been any unauthorized use of their EFS user name and password.
- (vi) The Verification required by Pa.R.C.P. Nos. 206.1 and 1024 and the signature page(s) of any document or legal paper executed by a client or other persons other than the filing party must be scanned and attached to the electronic filing in a portable document format at the time the legal paper is submitted.
- (vii) Documents requiring signatures of more than one party must be scanned and attached to the electronic filing in a portable document format at the time the legal paper is submitted.
- (viii) The original of a sworn or verified document that is electronically filed (e.g. affidavit) or is contained with an electronic filing (e.g. verification) shall be maintained by the electronic filer and made available upon direction of the court or reasonable request of the signatory or opposing party.

Explanatory Note: This subsection is designed to address issues which may arise regarding signatures on legal documents. A filer's use of the User Name and Password issued through the Delaware County Electronic Filing System is the filer's "electronic signature". However, legal documents often require verifications executed by non-filers. In addition, many legal documents require multiple signatures. Deficiencies in content and execution could be subject to preliminary objections. In order to avoid prejudicial delay, this section requires the filing party to scan such legal documents or signature pages and include them as part of the electronic filing at the time of submission. Original copies should be kept as provided for in Pa.R.C.P. No. 205.4 (b)(4).

(4) Electronic Filing Fees and Costs.

- (i) The Office of Judicial Support shall collect an electronic filing user fee for each legal paper or exhibit filed as established by the Office of Judicial Support with the approval of the President Judge of the Delaware County Court of Common Pleas.
- (ii) In addition to such electronic filing user fee, the Office of Judicial Support is authorized to charge a fee as set forth from time to time for each page of a legal paper or exhibit which is filed in hard copy format and which must be converted by the Office of Judicial Support to a portable document format.
- (iii) Electronic filers shall alert the EFS to any payment errors within forty-five (45) days of the payment date by notifying the Office of Judicial Support's Help Desk.

(5) Other Procedures Necessary to the Operation of a System of Electronic Filing: authorized by Pa.R.C.P. No. 205.4 (f), the following administrative procedures are adopted:

- (i) If a document is accepted, it shall be deemed to have been filed as of the date and time it was received by the Delaware County Electronic Filing System; provided, however, that if a document is submitted without the requisite fee, the document shall be deemed to have been accepted for filing as of the date payment was received. The Office of Judicial Support is authorized to refuse for filing a document submitted without the requisite payment. If the electronic document other than original process is accepted for filing, it will be electronically served as authorized by Pa.R.C.P. No. 205.4(g)(1)(ii) and service shall be effectuated as provided in Pa.R.C.P. No. 205.4(g)(2)(ii).
- (ii) *Termination Notice.* In addition to the procedures set forth in Pa.R.C.P. No. 230.2, in cases where a party is a registered user of the Delaware County Electronic Filing System, notice of proposed termination may also be electronic.
- (iii) An electronic filer is not required to file any paper copies unless specifically required by the court.

Note: In addition to the electronic paper, a Judge may request counsel or a self-represented litigant to provide a courtesy copy of a pleading(s) or other such material including but not limited to a memorandum of law, a pre-trial binder for the Court including relevant pleadings, a pre-trial memo, if any, stipulations and pre-labeled exhibits which may be useful to a Judge in preparation for trial. The Court may also request courtesy motions, petitions and answers to such pleadings from time to time.

- (iv) An electronic filer is not required to file multiple copies of documents unless requested by the Court, or as specified elsewhere in these local rules. If documents are to be served electronically, the electronic filer is not required to provide envelopes, unless requested by the Court or as specified elsewhere in the local rules, except for those parties who are to receive the document by regular mail or other means of service as required by other rules.
- (v) Electronic filing is permitted at all times when the EFS is available. If the EFS is unavailable at the time a registered user attempts to file a document, the registered user shall make reasonable efforts to file the document as soon as the unavailability ends.
- (vi) If a registered user believes the unavailability of the EFS prevented a timely filing to the party's prejudice, the registered user may submit a motion to the court within ten (10) days of the registered user's unsuccessful attempt to file the document. The motion shall state the date and time of the first unsuccessful attempt to file the document electronically, the date(s) and time(s) of any subsequent attempts to file the document electronically, and why the delay was prejudicial.
- (vii) The filing deadline for any document filed electronically is 11:59:59PM EST/EDT.
- (viii) *Documents with Attachments.* Attachments, including exhibits, that are part of any filing, shall be filed electronically at the same time as the document.
- (ix) An attachment or exhibit that exceeds the technical standards for the EFS or is unable to be electronically filed must be filed as ordered by the court. A Notice of Exhibit Attachment shall be filed in the EFS referencing such an exhibit with specifically and stating the reason why the exhibit was not filed electronically.
- (x) The Court may, on its own motion or for good cause shown, order a filing be made under seal. Filings requested to be made under seal shall be submitted to the Office of Judicial Support over the counter rather than through EFS.
- (xi) Sealed or confidential documents may be submitted for electronic filing in a manner that maintains confidentiality under applicable law.
- (xii) Filings not under seal are public and parties shall comply with the Public Access policy related to case records of the Appellate and Trial Courts of the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania under 204 Pa. Code 213.81 and Delaware County Administrative Rule No. 17-5120 .

Note: As required by Pa.R.C.P. No. 205.4(c)(1), access to the Delaware County Electronic Filing System shall be available at all times, except for required maintenance. However, legal papers can only be reviewed during normal court hours. Therefore, parties are cautioned to file required legal papers in advance of any filing deadline to enable timely correction and re-submission in the event a legal paper is not accepted or is refused for filing. The Office of Judicial Support may refuse for filing any legal paper submitted without the required filing fees as provided by 42 Pa.C.S. § 1725(c)(2)(xix), or, at the Office of Judicial Support's discretion, may authorize the filer to submit the required filing fees within a stated time period after which the Office of Judicial Support may refuse the legal paper for filing if payment is not received.

- (6) If a legal paper is refused for filing, the Office of Judicial Support shall specify the reason. Subject to the provisions of subsection Rule 205.4(e)(1)(i), a legal paper refused for filing shall be deemed as not having been filed.
- (7) Neither the Court nor the Office of Judicial Support are required to maintain a hard copy of any legal paper or exhibit, notice, or order filed or maintained electronically under this rule.
- (8) If a legal paper is electronically filed, the Delaware County Civil Electronic Filing System will automatically serve all persons who have previously submitted electronic filings in the same case, pursuant to Delaware County Civil Rule *205.4 and Pa. R.C.P. No. 205.4 (g) but the filing party must serve all others as required by rules of Court. All legal papers filed in a hard-copy format must be served by the filing party as required by rules of court.

Note: A party has the responsibility of providing legal papers and other correspondence to the Delaware County Sheriff's Office for service of original process pursuant to Pa. R.C.P. 400-425 The Delaware County Electronic Filing Service or CMS program does not encompass the Delaware County Sheriff's Office.

- (9) Documents shall use the universal PDF standard and shall be no more than 25 megabytes (mb). Files that exceed this limit must be split into multiple files so that each individual file is less than 25 megabytes (mb).
- (10) Color shall be Black and White, resolution of 300 dpi. If a filer has a document that is color or greystroke, the document shall not be filed electronically but must be submitted to the Office of Judicial Support.
- (11) All pleadings must conform to Pennsylvania Rule of Civil Procedure 204.1 (1) so that the size of the document be 8 ½ inch by 11 inch paper.
- (12) Any font that is not part of the Microsoft default font list must be embedded in the PDF document
- (13) PDF properties (Title, Author, Subject, and Keywords) should be removed from the document. Documents cannot be password protected or encrypted. Documents names shall not include any special characters such / ; * ? " < >

(g) (2) *Service by Electronic Transmission*

- (i) Service shall be made to registered users through the EFS and to all others as otherwise provided in the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure. Service by the EFS is complete upon transmission on a Saturday, a Sunday, a holiday recognized by Delaware County, or after 5:00PM EST/EDT, shall be considered complete on the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday or recognized Delaware County holiday.
- (ii) Other than original service, the electronic filer shall not be required to serve a paper copy of the electronic filing on the opposing party if the opposing party is a registered user on the EFS and the electronic filing has been served on them through the EFS.

- (h) An AOPC Civil Court Cover Sheet pursuant to Pa.R.C.P No. 205.5 shall be required and must be scanned separately from the original pleading

Note: The following documents may be filed through the EFS system. The Office of Judicial Support, once accepted, will forward the document to Court Administration for review and processing:

(1) Certificate of Readiness pursuant to Local Rule 241; (2) Debtor's Exemption under Local Rule 3123; (3) Application for Continuance in arbitration cases pursuant to Delaware County Local Rule 1303 (f) or for a hearing related to a petition or motion (Local Rule 206.1 (a)(1) and 208.3 (b) (1)); (4) License Suspension Appeal(Local Rule 29); (5) Tax Assessment Appeal(Local Rule 30); (6) Board of View (Local Rule 622 (k));and (8) Request for Extension pursuant to Local Rule 1028.

Once filed through the EFS system, the document will be processed by the Court Administrator and notice of the outcome and/or a hearing date , if any, will be sent electronically to the filing party. The party requesting a continuance shall provide advance notice to all parties in a case, state if the continuance is opposed or unopposed, and be responsible to notify all parties of the outcome of the request prior to a listed hearing or event.

Applications for Continuance in assigned cases may be filed electronically at the Court's discretion subject to the assigned judge's guidelines.

Motions or petitions seeking relief in emergency situations or stay of proceedings shall not be filed through the EFS system but shall be taken to the Office of Judicial Support to be time-stamped, processed, and docketed and then brought by the party seeking the emergency relief or the stay of proceedings to the Court Administrator for reference to the appropriate judge.

Note: This rule is adopted as required by Pa.R.C.P. No. 239.9.