



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## *General District Court of Rockingham County and City of Harrisonburg*

53 COURT SQUARE, ROOM 132  
HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA 22801-3720

JOHN STANLEY HART, JR.  
JUDGE

WILLIAM W. ELDRIDGE, IV  
JUDGE

TERESA L. BROWN  
CLERK

TRAFFIC & CRIMINAL

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## **ORDER**

### **MEMBERS OF THE HARRISONBURG/ROCKINGHAM COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION**

First, thank you for your patience and understanding regarding this ever-changing health emergency. As Chief Judge of the 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, I have been diligently working to determine a General District Court-related solution to the COVID-19 pandemic for days. Yesterday, I sent out an Order to attempt to mitigate the potential spread of COVID-19 within the courthouse and to protect the vulnerable in our community. This Order was shortly followed the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court declaring a judicial emergency through April 6, 2020.

Based on the Order declaring the judicial emergency, Harrisonburg/Rockingham General District Court will continue all civil, traffic and criminal matters, with the exception of emergency matters, to or beyond the April 6, 2020 date. As stated in the Order, "emergency matters" will include isolation petitions, inmate arraignments and counsel determinations, bail reviews, petitions for protective orders and civil commitment hearings. The following is how we will proceed regarding these matters:

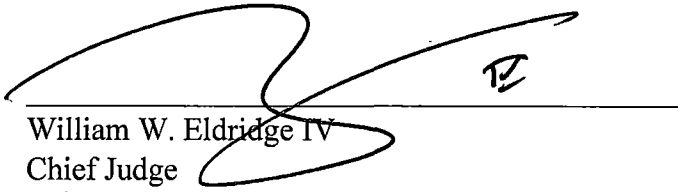
1. Arraignments of Incarcerated Defendants and Counsel Determinations – Beginning Wednesday, March 18, 2020, these hearings will occur Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 1:00 p.m. by video;
2. Bond Hearings – Beginning Wednesday, March 18, 2020, bond hearings will occur Monday, Wednesday and Friday after arraignments. In accordance with Chief Justice Lemons' direction to use video technology during this time period as much as possible, all bond hearings will be by video. Counsel must file the current bond hearing notice by 1:00 p.m. the day prior to the requested bond hearing;

3. Protective Order Hearings – All currently scheduled protective order hearings will go forward as scheduled. All new protective order hearings will be scheduled at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday;
4. Currently Scheduled Trials or Preliminary Hearings for Incarcerated Defendants – At this time, all misdemeanor trials and felony preliminary hearings are continued pursuant to the Order Declaring a Judicial Emergency. However, in anticipation that the Chief Justice could lengthen this Order and knowing that individuals are being held pending trial or preliminary hearing, we will institute a criminal trial scheduling docket on Tuesdays at 1:00 p.m. – Beginning Tuesday, March 24, 2020. This scheduling docket is **only for cases involving incarcerated defendants**. The purpose of the scheduling hearing is to schedule trials, preliminary hearings, and dispositions. We will schedule these specific matters during the timeframe of the judicial emergency or further if the emergency continues. However, we ask that counsel does not abuse this process. Please only schedule a trial, preliminary hearing or disposition if those three things will occur. All parties need to cooperate with each other during this difficult time. If counsel desires to have their client's case put on the scheduling docket, they must provide notice to the clerk's office by each Monday at 1:00 p.m. The defendant will appear for the scheduling hearing by video.

For the proceedings heard in the next twenty-one days and until the conclusion of the state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia, I am asking that the attorneys please attempt to discourage unnecessary witnesses and spectators in the courtroom. As well, regarding any of these proceedings, please request a continuance immediately if you, your client, or any witness is ill, has recently traveled internationally or has been exposed to COVID-19. Unless hampered by manpower shortages, the clerk's office will maintain normal business hours. However, please try to give the clerk's office some time before calling to find out new court dates. This is an enormous project, and the clerks are working very hard to have this run as smoothly as possible.

Judge Hart and I both appreciate everyone's patience and understanding through this difficult process. We are trying to take the appropriate steps as outlined in the Order Declaring a Judicial Emergency. Obviously, this is a fluid process and there might be additional orders or directions in the coming days.

IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 17<sup>th</sup> DAY OF MARCH 2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a horizontal line and a small mark resembling the number '12'.

William W. Eldridge IV  
Chief Judge  
26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District

Cc:

Harrisonburg/Rockingham Bar Association  
Harrisonburg/Rockingham Commonwealth's Attorneys Office