



AD HOC MUNICIPAL COURT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, August 11, 2020
11:00 a.m.
City Council Conference Room, City Hall, Room 290
200 Texas Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

Viewing Only

Television: Charter 190; One Source 7; Verizon 5; AT&T Uverse 99
City of Fort Worth Website Homepage: [Watch Live Online](#)

The packet for the meeting follows this agenda.

Due to health and safety concerns related to the COVID-19 coronavirus, this meeting will be conducted by videoconference or telephone call in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and the provisions provided by the Governor of Texas in conjunction with the Declaration of Disaster enacted on March 13, 2020.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Councilmember Ann Zadeh, Chair
Councilmember Kelly Allen Gray

Councilmember Gyna Bivens
Councilmember Dennis Shingleton

Valerie R. Washington, Staff Liaison
Laetitia Brown, Legal Liaison

- I. Call to Order - Councilmember Ann Zadeh, Chair
- II. Approval of Minutes of Meeting from May 12, 2020
- III. Discussion Items
 - A. Update on Municipal Court Services Director Selection-Valerie R. Washington, Assistant City Manager
 - B. City Council Informal Reports on Municipal Court - William F. Rumuly, Director Municipal Court Services
 - i. Reopening
 - ii. Filings, Revenue, Expenditures, and Staffing

iii. Internal Working Group – Valerie R. Washington, Assistant City Manager

C. Municipal Court COVID Update - William F. Rumuly, Director Municipal Court Services/ Chief Judge Danny Rodgers

- i. Budget and Staffing
- ii. Virtual Dockets and Hearings
- iii. Warrants

D. Marshal Operations Update- Phil Swift, City Marshal

- i. Lake Patrol
- ii. Buildings
- iii. Field Operations

E. Judicial Staffing- Danny Rodgers, Chief Judge

F. Behavioral Insights Team(BIT) Project - William F. Rumuly, Director Municipal Court Services

G. Texas Municipal Courts Education Center (TMCEC) User Feedback Pilot Survey Project-LaMysa Laney, Acting Clerk of the Court

H. Municipal Court Facilities Update – William F. Rumuly, Director Municipal Court Services

- i. A.D. Marshall Public Safety and Courts Building
- ii. Golden Triangle Library Opening

I. Warrant Forgiveness and Court in the Community – William F. Rumuly, Director Municipal Court Services

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION - The Committee may conduct a closed meeting for the following purposes:

1) Seek the advice of its attorney about pending or contemplated litigation, settlement offers, or any matter in which the duty of the attorney under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct of the State Bar of Texas clearly conflicts with the Texas Open Meetings Act, as authorized by Section 551.071 of the Texas Government Code:

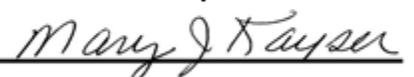
(a) Legal issues concerning any item listed on today's Committee agenda;

V. Request for Future Agenda Items

VI. Adjournment

Please Note: It is anticipated that additional members of the Fort Worth City Council will be attending the meeting for information-gathering purposes. Any members of the Council who are not on the Committee will not be deliberating or voting on any Committee agenda items.

I, the undersigned authority do hereby certify that this Notice of Meeting was posted on the City of Fort Worth official website and said Notice was posted on the following date and time Friday, August 07, 2020 at 1:00 pm. and remained so posted continuously for at least 72 hours preceding the scheduled time of said meeting.



***PENDING COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

AD HOC MUNICIPAL COURT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING, MAY 12, 2020

Due to the health and safety concerns related to the COVID-19 coronavirus, this meeting was conducted by videoconference and telephone call in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and the provisions provided by the Governor of Texas in conjunction with the Declaration of Disaster enacted on March 13, 2020.

AD HOC MUNICIPAL COURT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councilmember Ann Zadeh, Chair
Councilmember Kelly Allen Gray
Councilmember Gyna Biven
Councilmember Dennis Shingleton

STAFF PRESENT:

Valerie R. Washington, Assistant City Manager
William F. Rumuly, Interim Director Municipal Court Services
Danny Rodgers, Chief Judge
Simon C. Gonzalez, Deputy Chief Judge
LaMysa Laney, Acting Clerk of the Court
Laetitia Coleman Brown, Sr. Assistant City Attorney
Phillip Swift, City Marshal Municipal Court
Celia R. Gaytan, Judges' Assistant

- I. Councilmember Ann Zadeh called the meeting to order at 3:02p.m.**

- II. Approval of the minutes from February 18, 2020.** Motion was made by Councilmember Shingleton, seconded by Council Bivens, and carried to approve the minutes.

- III. Discussion Items**
 - A. Update on Municipal Court Services Director Search – Valerie R. Washington, Assistant City Manager**

Ms. Washington stated that Ms. Ewing retired in January 2020. In February 2020, they utilized an HR contract with Career Management Partners to seek candidates to interview for the director position. Eight video interviews took place. Ultimately, the committee determined to bring back one candidate for a final interview and plan to come back with a recommendation next month. Ms. Washington concluded by saying that the interview committee plans to come back with a recommendation next month. Since there is no Ad Hoc Committee meeting next month, Ms. Washington will communicate via email with all the Court Committee members.

B. Municipal Court COVID Update and Impacts – William F. Rumuly, Interim Director Municipal Court Services/Danny Rodgers, Chief Judge

Mr. Rumuly gave a brief presentation on Municipal Court COVID Update and Impacts.

i. Original Impacts to Operations

- a. Cancel and reschedule hearings
- b. Close Court Locations
- c. Moving Staff to Work From Home
- d. Other Impacts

Mr. Rumuly stated that the Municipal Court had just finished with the Warrant Forgiveness event in February. From mid to late March, a lot of information related to COVID-19 became available and difficult decisions had to be made.

On March 15, 2020 all dockets were cancelled. The court facilities were closed to the public on March 23. Prior to March 17, 2020, the virtual warrants process kicked off. The Judges were able to process search warrants, arrest warrants utilizing WebEx. An officer is not required to come in person, everything can be done virtually.

Administration moved as quickly as they could to reduce the number of staff members that were physically coming in to work. Over a two-week period, many staff members were allowed to begin working from home. The clerk of court area and the warrant clerk area and administration were all able to work from home. The marshal's area is still physically coming in to work and have been very active in working through the entire process.

Judge Rodgers stated that six judges are working at the court and five judges are telecommuting from home. Currently, staff is working on video call and electronic document routing for virtual court and customer processing.

Magistration, which is an essential duty, was moved from 350 W. Belknap to Public Safety Building (PSB beginning on March 30, 2020 with the day shift judge and clerk and concluding on April 10 with the remaining judges and clerical staff.

Mr. Rumuly concluded by saying that a small contingency, four to five people, are still needed and coming in physically to work to manage city mail, email, process online payments and to process deposits every other day.

Currently, we continue to work on all of our dockets to see how many dockets that we can move to a virtual process. Except for jury trials, we should will be able to move most, if not all dockets into a virtual process.

ii. Virtual Cashier and Walk-in

Soft launch-May 5, 2020

iii. Staff Engagement

a. Daily Briefing

Mr. Rumuly stated that staff has been very flexible, agile during this time. Administration has worked on a couple of different things to help staff stay connected while telecommuting. Mr. Rumuly has been providing daily briefings via messages to help staff have continuity understanding, one message going out to everyone.

b. All Staff WebEx

Administration held a WebEx meeting to discuss concerns and/or offer solutions to staff, if needed, while telecommuting.

c. Staff Survey

The purpose of the survey was to stay connected with staff. The court did not want staff to feel disconnected once telecommuting began. The court was thankful for the positive feedback and the helpful information that was returned from staff.

A task force was established for the opening of the court. The prosecutors were involved. We have been ensuring that all the stakeholders who are in the facility to participate in those discussions and those transitions.

iv. Budget Impacts

a. Expense - Two teams were created to get feedback from staff on budget impacts.

The expense team was established to get feedback on potentially positive decisions the department could make in order to overcome challenges due to closing of the courts for almost two months.

There has been an impact to costs related to notices that were cancelled. All hearings in March will not be renewed until after the court reopens. Anticipated date for reopening of the courts is June or July 2020.

b. Revenues

The revenue team worked on basic estimates related to what the court thought the revenue impact would be for the month of April. Nothing is due on the Civil side and Criminal side until after June 1st.

All hearings in March were cancelled. This saved expenses due to no interpreters needed for trials and hearings. They are looking at ways as to how to mitigate the impact of the cancellation of trials and hearings.

As a result of closing the two court facilities, April had a significant drop of 93% in case filings.

Currently, the department is working on a reopening plan. Virtual walk-in dockets will begin June 1.

v. Texas Office of Court Administration

a. Guidance

Judge Rodgers stated that our courts are subject to orders from the Texas Supreme Court, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals and guidance from the Texas Office of Court of Administration (OCA). He further stated that last week, OCA directed the preparation of an Operating Plan for the City of Fort Worth Municipal Court. The plan will be prepared and submitted for approval prior to June 1st.

We will also offer multiple ways to interact with the court virtually including all manner of smart devices. We plan to move slowly because we want to do it right. The health of the citizens and the health of the staff is our top priority.

Judge Rodgers stated that he has certainly realized, more so in the last couple of weeks, there is also a comfort level for people to begin to come back to work, and working together moving forward. So he asked for patience as staff moves forward with the dockets. He stated that he know the committee has always been so supportive of him and our court and he appreciated that.

Judge Rodgers stated judicial staff does not yet know how they will handle jury trials. OCA has promised to send further guidance as to what that looks like. Judge Rodgers stated that staff will get there, just not quickly. He stated that he believed that bench trials could be conducted over the WebEx platform.

Judge Rodgers also discussed the Attorney Plea Docket. He explained that this docket enables the Court to move a large number of cases. Because of the number of people involved, this docket will be difficult going forward.

Judge Rodgers stated the he was very proud of the fact that the last several years, through really hard work in collaboration with multiple people and multiple departments, we reduced our jury docket waiting time to virtually nothing, weeks as opposed to years as it was several years ago. By rescheduling dockets, there will be a backlog of approximately 1,500 cases on the jury docket and about 2,000 cases on the plea docket. Judge Rodgers committed to doing his best to keep the committee informed.

Judge Rodgers stated that the Court answers to OCA, the Texas Supreme Court and the Court of Criminal Appeals, but, most importantly, the Court answers to Council and the citizens of the City of Fort Worth.

C Virtual Jail Arraignments – William Rumuly, Interim Municipal Court Services Director

Mr. Rumuly stated that he would be remiss if he didn't say thank you to the ITS Department, Property Management office, Purchasing and Communications offices for assisting the courts with the transition of the jail operations and for assisting with the transformation and operations of the virtual arraignment court.

Mr. Rumuly also stated that the State of Texas requires the Municipal Court to be an open courtroom. Municipal Court meets those expectations and requirements.

The citizens are encouraged to visit the court's website to initiate request for e-services. Links to Virtual Courtrooms 1-9 can be located on the City's website.

D Judicial and Substitute Hearing Officer Appointments – William Rumuly, Interim Director Municipal Court Services/Danny Rodgers, Chief Judge

- Appointment of One Substitute Hearing Officer Amy Messer

Mr. Rumuly stated that originally back in February, the appointment of one substitute hearing officer Amy Messer, was approved. The training process has started.

- Appointment of Eleven Full-time Judges

Judge Rodgers stated that back in February the Court Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the appointment of eleven municipal court judges. This did take place on April the 7th. The committee had very brief talk about judicial compensation and adjustments for the judges and Judge Rodgers stated the he would come back at another time in the near future on that matter. Judge Rodgers informed the committee that he would not be making a request for a raise this fiscal year.

E. Municipal Court Facilities Update – William F. Rumuly, Interim Director Municipal Court Services

- i. A.D. Marshall Public Safety and Courts Building Update - PSB

- a. Courtrooms, Bathrooms, and ADA Ramp - Mr. Rumuly stated that Courtroom No. 4 and Courtroom No. 5 have been completed. The ADA Women’s-first floor restroom and the ADA Men’s-first floor restroom have also been completed.
- b. Artwork Update – Artwork installed January 18, 2020. All staff Town Hall Q & A Session is scheduled for Wednesday, May 13, 2020
- c. A ribbon cutting celebration for PSB date has not been determined.
 - ii. Golden Triangle Library

Mr. Rumuly stated that the anticipated date to open the Golden Triangle Library is summer of 2020. The virtual court hours of operation have not been determined. The court will utilize two clerks.

- iii Southwest Municipal Court

Mr. Rumuly stated that the closing of SWMC was based on many factors and will not be reopening. Consolidation of SWMC to PSB took place May 4, 2020.

F. 2020 Warrant Forgiveness Update – William F. Rumuly, Interim Director Municipal Court Services

Review Warrant Forgiveness Video Footage:

- i. Recap of Events – February 3-28, 2020; Nine Court in the Community sites
- ii. Final Statistics - February 2020

# of Defendants Appeared In Court with Warrants	3,658
# of Warrants Cleared	13,831
# of Warrant Confirmations (field officers or other agencies)	2,216
#Warrants Cleared in Court Room	11,615
Total of # of Calls Taken Regarding Warrants	1,031
Total Gross Collections (Costs, Fees, Fines, Bonds)	1,250,863
- iii. Review Survey Results, event surveys, site surveys, department surveys and Mayor and City Council Surveys – Available upon request
- iv. Preview Warrant Forgiveness Video Footage – Available upon request

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION – The Committee may conduct a closed meeting for the following purposes:

- 1) Seek the advice of its attorney about pending or contemplated litigation, settlement offers, or any matter in which the duty of the attorney under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct of the State of Texas clearly conflicts with the Texas Open Meetings Act, as authorized by Section 551.071 of the Texas Government Code:

- (a) Legal Issues concerning any items listed on today's Committee agenda; and

No executive session was conducted.

V. Request for Future Agenda Items – No future agenda items were requested.

VI. The meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.