

**ST. LOUIS COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT
VELDA CITY / FLORDELL HILLS DIVISIONS**

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN (COOP)

The Velda City and Flordell Hills Municipal Division Courts submit this COOP to ensure the Court that during the COVID -19 related hiatus these Municipal Divisions will continue to utilize all available resources to maintain continuity of operations to provide essential court functions while also ensuring that citizens and employees who enter the Velda City/Flordell Hills court facilities feel confident for their own safety and understand that the health and welfare of everyone involved in judicial proceedings is paramount.

The Court will consult with local judiciary partners and rely on local health officials or departments and CDC guidelines to adapt court operating decisions to local health conditions.

The Court will reexamine and update local court order and COVID-19 notices as appropriate.

The Court will make accommodations to vulnerable litigants, witnesses, victims, attorneys and other individuals involved in court proceedings to participate in the proceedings remotely or postpone their required presence at the court facility.

The Court will utilize all available technologies, including teleconferencing and video conferencing, whenever possible to limit in-person courtroom appearances to the extent not prohibited by constitutional or statutory provisions.

The Court will permit vulnerable judicial employees to return to work but supervisors shall make reasonable accommodations to address those vulnerabilities. The Court will insist that judicial employees stay home if they a) are subject to a quarantine or isolation order or are living with or caring for such an individual; b) have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine or are living with or caring for an individual who has been advised to self-quarantine; c) are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 are seeking medical treatment, or are living with or caring for such an individual.

The Court will comply with all CDC/Department of Public Health directives relating to quarantining and contact tracing whenever COVID is detected.

Upon receiving approval from the St. Louis County Circuit Court, the Velda City and Flordell Hills Divisions will resume court activity involving personal appearances pursuant to the following interim policies, procedures and practices:

SOCIAL DISTANCING (1)

The Velda City and Flordell Hills Municipal Divisions maintain separate dockets. The same judge, provisional judge, court administrator, court support personnel and prosecutor serve both courts. Both courts utilize the City of Velda City Council Chambers for court sessions. This room has a maximum capacity, per fire code, of 100. During the pandemic hiatus court sessions will proceed as follows:

- To minimize the number in attendance and promote social distancing, except as necessary to physically assist a defendant, friends and family members of defendants will be denied entry. Continuances will be granted for defendants denied entry.
- Defendants will be heard on a sign-in, first come first served basis. Hearings will begin upon arrival of the first defendant.
- 6 feet of separation will be maintained by numerous means. Chairs will be arranged in a line, six feet apart for defendants with disabilities, all other defendants will remain in line 6 feet or more apart in the court room.
- Tables and chairs will be arranged with 6 feet of separation in the courtroom.
- Hand sanitizer will be set up thru-out the building and hallway.
- Defendants will be encouraged to bring their own pens. Pens provided will be in a “new” box and then put into a “used” box. Used pens will all be wiped down with sanitizing wipes before reuse.
- Defendants who do not need to pay will exit thru the side door of the courtroom.
- Defendants are required to pass through a metal detector, similar to the system used at the St. Louis County Courthouse. 6 feet intervals will be marked with tape on the floor of the lobby before and after the metal detector. Defendants, if any, waiting outside the building will be instructed to maintain social distancing via signage and tape on the walkway. Tape will be on the walkway at six feet intervals. Signs will be in place directing everyone to stay on their line until moving forward.
- The bailiff will be at the entrance of the building with a sign-in sheet. A clerk will pull these files for the judge(s) and/or clerk.
- Attorneys or defendants who wish to see the Prosecutor will also be separated by 6 feet intervals outside of the Prosecutor’s office. Hand sanitizer, wipes and pens will be provided there as above.

COMPLIANCE WITH CDC AND DPH DIRECTIVES (2)

- All must enter through the metal detector. All must have their temperatures taken via a hand-held, remote read thermometer which will be utilized at the metal detector. Those who display a temperature in excess of 100.3 degrees will be denied entry. Cases of defendants who are denied entry will be continued.
- All must wear protective face masks. Defendants will be encouraged to provide their own face masks. Masks will be provided, as available. Those without face masks will be denied entry. Cases of defendants who are denied entry will be continued.
- Court personnel and defendants will wear masks at all times during court sessions.
- Velda City employs a full time staff of building maintenance workers who continue to use enhanced cleaning methods for disinfecting all the public areas of the building.
- Gloves will be available for use as needed.
- Hand sanitizer will be available at each processing station; as the public enters the building, at the metal detector, at the entrance to the courtroom/conference room, at each table in the courtroom/conference room, and in the prosecutor's office.
- Disinfecting wipes will also be available at the table at the entrance to the courtroom and at each table in the courtroom/conference room.

ALTERNATE MEANS FOR COURT OPERATIONS (3)

In order to limit the number of defendants and/or attorneys required to appear in Court, the following steps have been, and will continue be taken:

- Attorney requests to recall warrants, which provide defendant's current mailing address and phone number, received via mail, email or fax will be granted. A new court date will be mailed to defendant.
- Requests for continuances, will be reviewed by the Judge.
- The Court will continue to employ a liberal policy to facilitate pleas without personal appearances.
- Defendants who would normally be required to appear will be notified that, at their option, they may return a Conditional Guilty Plea to the Court. The Notice will also state that the Judge and Prosecutor will review their case file and subsequently send them Guilty Plea, Sentence and payment documentation for their review and approval. The Notice will state that they will then have option to finalize their plea by signing and returning their Guilty Plea, Sentence and payment documentation, with payment included. The Notice will also state that if, after receiving the Guilty Plea and Sentence

documentation they do not wish to finalize the disposition of their case, they must appear on the court date stated in their Guilty Plea, Sentence documentation. The Notice will state that their Conditional Guilty Plea will be deemed withdrawn if they fail to appear on the date stated in their Guilty Plea, Sentence documentation.

- Defendants who would normally appear in court to ask for the Driving Improvement Program may request this via a written request. Information and phone numbers about the program will then be given along with a new program completion/court date.
- Attorneys who receive recommendations from the prosecutor, normally requiring a court appearance (i.e. probation to be ordered), may request the case be handled by mail. Court staff will send forms to facilitate plea, sentencing and payment.
- The Court will add court sessions. Currently, court is held three times a month, at 5:00 p.m. Additional dockets will be added at 3:00 p.m. and at 5:00 p.m. on one of the Court dates each month to stagger the number of defendants on each docket.
- The Prosecutor has informed the Court that his office will continue the practice of being available to attorneys, witnesses, complainants and victims for pre-setting case review discussions via, telephone, mail, videoconferencing, fax &/or email.

NOTIFICATIONS (4)

- The Velda City/Flordell Hills website continues to be updated regularly re: current court protocols.
- Signs are posted on all doors of Velda City Building with information about court procedures and what to expect upon entering the building.
- Signs will be posted at the metal detector listing requirements for entry into the courtroom(s) pursuant to guidelines set forth in the Supreme Court's Operational Directives.
- Mail notifications will include information stating that CDC guidelines are in effect. Notifications will inform that face masks and body temperatures below 100.4 degrees are required for entry. Notifications will recommend that defendants provide their own protective face masks and pens. Notifications will inform that friends and family members will be denied entry.

The Velda City and Flordell Hills Divisions will continue to follow guidelines suggested and ordered by the CDC and the DPH to protect citizens and employees as we progress thru all phases of reopening during this pandemic.


Brian Dunlop, Judge

12/2/20
Date

**In the Circuit Court of St. Louis County, Missouri
Twenty-First Judicial Circuit
Velda City/Flordell Hills Municipal Divisions**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 23 RESPONSES

1. ISSUING AND RECALLING WARRANTS

The Municipal Judge will review and consider recalling outstanding warrants for municipal matters – unless there are concerns for the safety of a victim, witness or the community. While every case should be reviewed on a case-by case basis, this court sees little reason for the existence of any warrant for the failure of a defendant to appear for a court proceeding during the pandemic.

2. SETTING AND REDUCING BONDS

Although Sect. 479.360 RSMo. Provides municipal judges 48 hours to review the bond conditions and confinement status of defendants on minor traffic violations and 72 hours on “other violations,” such delay could be unsafe, risking unnecessary exposure to the Coronavirus. The Velda City/Flordell Hills Municipal Judge will review confined defendants’ condition for release, in a manner that reduces unnecessary person-to-person contact.

3. RECEIVING PAYMENTS

The court will continue to receive payments through the mail or in the locked drop box located in the front lobby of the Public Safety Building. The defendant may pay online through the following websites.

For tickets issued PRIOR to January 1, 2020: www.municourt.net.

For tickets issued AFTER January 1, 2020: www.courts.mo.gov/casenet.

4. PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT COURT DATES.

Defendants may find information regarding court dates and case information through the following websites.

For tickets issued PRIOR to January 1, 2020: www.municourt.net.

For tickets issued AFTER January 1, 2020: www.courts.mo.gov/casenet.

**In the Circuit Court of St. Louis County, Missouri
Twenty-First Judicial Circuit
Velda City/Flordell Hills Municipal Divisions**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 24 RESPONSES

1. PROCEDURES FOR BOND CONDITION REVIEW FOR IN-CUSTODY DEFENDANTS

Although Section 479.360 RSMo. provides municipal judges 48 hours to review the bond conditions and confinement status of defendants on minor traffic violations and 72 hours on “other violations,” such delay could be unsafe, risking unnecessary exposure to the Coronavirus. The Velda City/Flordell Hills Municipal Judge will expeditiously review confined defendants’ conditions for release, in a matter that reduces unnecessary person-to-person contact. This court sees no reason why prosecutors would need more than a few hours to make such decisions.

2. PROCEDURES FOR THE RECALL OF OUTSTANDING WARRANTS AND BOND REVIEWS

The Municipal Judge will review and consider recalling outstanding warrants for municipal matters unless there are concerns for the safety of victim, witness or the community. While every case should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, this court sees little reason for the existence of any warrant for failure of a defendant to appear for a court proceeding during this pandemic.

3. INDICATION THAT THE COURT HAS ALL UPDATED CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THE MUNICIPAL JUDGE AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATOR

The Velda City/Flordell Hills Municipal Division has updated all current information for the Municipal Judge, Provisional Judge and Court Administrator.

**In the Circuit Court of St. Louis County, Missouri
Twenty-First Judicial Circuit
Velda City/Flordell Hills Municipal Divisions**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 30 RESPONSES

1. THE MUNICIPAL DIVISION'S PLAN FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING:

A. How will the courtroom be marked so that people know where to stand/sit?

The Velda City/Flordell Hills Municipal Division will have markings for all visitors to stand/sit 6 feet apart from each other for social distancing. All areas of the court room will be marked off so that defendants and/or attorneys will not be able to approach any court staff within 6 feet. Plexiglas will be in place at the pay station.

B. How will the courtroom's population be limited before and during court sessions? (Gate keeper? Only litigants?)

The courtroom will be limited to just the defendant when possible unless a parent would like to attend. Due to the limitation of 10 people in the courtroom only 5 defendants would be allowed at a time in the courtroom and five defendants waiting outside the courtroom in the hallway. Officers will remind everyone to abide by the social distancing guidelines. Attorneys are also being notified they and/or their client will not need to appear in court and their plea may be mailed in with payment.

2. THE MUNICIPAL DIVISION'S PLAN FOR USING ALTERNATE MEANS FOR COURT OPERATIONS:

A. Remote Hearings

Defendants will be notified through the mail with an attached letter with instructions on using WebEx, instructions on how to pay out of court, and information to contact the Court Administrator for any assistance needed. The WebEx information will be published on the City's website. Dockets will initially be limited to 30 every half hour, with staggered docket times and additional dockets set as needed. The number will increase/decrease as needed.

B. Staggered and additional dockets

Additional court dockets will be added to reduce the size of dockets. Attorneys are being notified they may send their plea and/or payment through the mail and a court appearance is not required.

C. Coordinated waiting areas – parking lots, marked off sidewalk, etc.

Areas up to the court room will marked off by 6 foot markings and also a Police Officer will be addressing social distancing procedures while standing outside the Public Safety Building as visitors are entering the building to attend court.

3. THE MUNICIPAL DIVISION'S PLAN FOR COMPLYING WITH CDC/DPH GUIDELINES:

A. Masks/Gloves

Masks will be required before entering the building.

B. Sanitizing/disinfecting

Sanitizer will be provided. There are currently hand sanitizer dispensers attached to the wall when you walk in before the metal detector, entering the courtroom door and leaving the courtroom door. Disinfecting spray and paper towels will be available to wipe down chairs and counters as needed.

C. Addressing employees/litigants who have been exposed to COVID -19

Currently all municipal division personnel are encouraged to stay home if sick or with fever or exhibiting any symptoms associated with COVID-19 until such time that is safe for them to return. All employees are required to use hand sanitizer, take their temperature and answer questions and signing off on a sheet before entering any City buildings. All visitors will be required to use hand sanitizer, fill out the COVID-19 informational form which ask for a phone number and have their temperature taken and documented on the form before passing through the metal detector.

4. THE MUNICIPAL DIVISION'S PLAN TO NOTIFY LITIGANTS OF COURT PROTOCOLS TO INSTIL CONFIDENCE IN COMING TO THE COURT.

New Court procedures will be added to the City of Richmond Height's website Municipal Court Sections explaining the new court protocols. It will also be posted on the doors prior to entering the building.