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TYRRELL CO., C.S.C.

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER**  
**SPECIAL COVID-19 PROCEDURES-JURY TRIALS**

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**THIS MATTER** comes before the undersigned to establish special procedures for jury trials for Criminal and Civil Superior and Civil District Court necessitated by the current COVID-19 pandemic, to implement social distancing and other personal protective policies established by both the State and Federal Governments. These procedures are established for the jury sessions beginning after November 1, 2020 and will remain in effect until modified or revoked.

**A. Jury Trial Summons and Deferral**

Alternate One-Courthouse plus overflow locations.

1. Jury *voir dire* shall be conducted in two sessions. The first session will commence on Monday at 9:30 a.m. with jury orientation and will be for those designated as Group A jurors. A total of 60 jurors will be summoned by the Clerk as Group A jurors. The summons for Group A jurors shall require them to call the Jury line after 6 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the session to confirm they are to report on Monday. Counsel and parties shall not report to the Superior Courtroom until 10:00 a.m. Group A jurors who are selected and jurors who have not been excused by the Court shall return to the Courtroom at 2:00 p.m. to their assigned seat to continue with jury selection.
2. The second session will commence at 1:30 p.m. with jury orientation and will be for those designated as Group B jurors. A total of 50 jurors will be summoned by the Clerk as Group B jurors. The summons for Group B jurors shall require them to call the Jury line after 6 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the session to confirm they are to report on Monday. Group B jurors are also required to call on Monday after 12:00 p.m. to confirm they are to report at 1:30 p.m. Counsel and parties shall not be required to report to the Superior Courtroom until 2:00 p.m. Jury *voir dire* will



commence and will continue until a full panel of 12 jurors and 1 alternate is selected.

#### Alternate Two- Jury selection in off-site location

3. The jury venire shall be summoned to one off site location large enough to accommodate all the Court, clerks, parties and all jurors. Jury selection will be conducted as usual to the greatest extent possible. Once selected, the trial will be conducted in the Courthouse.
4. Any offsite location shall be arranged by the County in compliance with all social distancing guidelines. The County shall also be responsible for all sanitizing of the facility.
5. A letter to the jury from the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, the District Attorney and the Clerk of Court will be included in the Jury summons for all Criminal Superior Court jury sessions noting the safety measures that have been taken in preparing for the jury session.
6. A letter to the jury from the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge and the Clerk of Court will be included in the jury summons for all Civil Superior Court jury sessions noting the safety measures that have been taken in preparing for the jury session.
7. A letter to the jury from the Chief District Court Judge and the Clerk of Court will be included in the jury summons for all Civil District Court jury sessions noting the safety measures that have been taken in preparing for the jury session.
8. The jury deferral process will be handled as normal, with the District Court Judges being more lenient to those susceptible to COVID-19.
9. That at least two weeks prior to the jury session there will be a meeting of all principal to this agreement, to walkthrough the procedures and process that is to take place, including the WebEx jury *voir dire* in the overflow rooms, the entry process, the sanitizing responsibilities and all other details necessary to safely conduct a jury session.



## **B. Jury Arrival and Orientation**

1. Each person shall have their temperature taken prior to entering the courthouse daily and be required to wear a face covering at all times while in the Courthouse. A temperature above the CDC recommendation will result in the person not entering the building.
2. The jurors shall report to the main entrance of the Superior courtroom and shall move directly into the seats designated under social distancing guidelines. Once the Superior Courtroom is full the Bailiff shall direct the remaining jurors to the designated overflow room in the same manner. The overflow room shall be equipped with a WebEx capable laptop connected to a large TV monitor for real-time communication with the Superior courtroom.
3. The Judge will take jury excuses from the Superior Courtroom.
4. The jury orientation video will be shown if time allows.
5. The jury box will be the first 8 rows of the Superior Courtroom seating, which shall be marked for social distancing.

## **C. Jury Selection**

1. Upon the call of the first case for trial, 12 jurors will be called to the jury box and the jury *voir dire* process will begin.
2. Live WebEx feed will be maintained in the overflow room. The jurors called will come to the Superior Courtroom to join the others in the jury box.
3. Once the jury has been selected, the remaining jurors will be instructed as needed.



#### **D. Trial**

1. Counsel tables will be arranged so that counsel can see the jury and the witness.
2. Plexiglass will be installed around the witness stand. The witness shall remove their face covering while testifying.
3. All witnesses shall be affirmed, and the witness stand will be sanitized after each witness.
4. Counsel shall remain at the counsel table when questioning witnesses but may otherwise move through the courtroom to present evidence.
5. Should there be any issue requiring discussion outside the presence of the jury, the jury will proceed to the jury deliberation room that is marked according to social distancing standards to accommodate the 13 jury members.
6. Face coverings for personal health protection shall be worn at all times by all persons in the courtroom but may be lowered for the purpose of witness identification.
7. Exhibits will be handled by as few persons as possible. The parties are encouraged to premark all Exhibits, and to provide any witness with their own copy while having them identify the original through the plexiglass.
8. Exhibits shall be published to the jury panel by display on monitors or screens.
9. If exhibits are allowed by the Court to be given to the jurors, the party offering the exhibit shall provide individual copies for all jurors.
10. The Court Reporter shall be set up at a location where the faces of both the witness and counsel are capable of being observed.



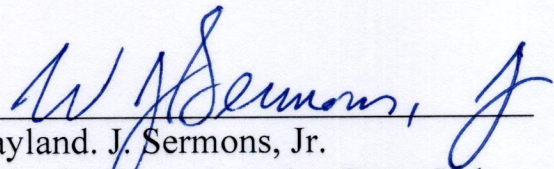
11. Additional procedures such as restroom protocol, and other logistical matters shall be addressed during the trial as circumstances dictate.
12. All court surfaces and assembly areas shall be sanitized every day before court opens and again during the lunch break. Hand sanitizer and tissues shall be provided to jurors, the parties, and others present in the courtroom.
13. The Bailiff/Clerk/County shall wipe/replace microphone covers, and wipe between witnesses and the surface area of the witness stand and plexiglass.
14. No persons shall be allowed into the Courthouse if they are not healthy or are symptomatic.
15. That in the event a juror, defendant, attorney, witness, Judge, or other court personnel becomes symptomatic or test positive or have an immediate family member test positive for COVID-19 during the trial, the Court will comply with all requirements of the CDC, Coronavirus Task Force and local health department and the trial will stop, proceed or be delayed as recommended.



## CERTIFICATIONS

1. The undersigned certifies that each court facility and alternate facility being used for court operations is in compliance with each of the Chief Justice's emergency orders in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.
2. The undersigned certifies that this plan has been approved by the Chief District Court Judge, the Clerk of Superior Court, the District Attorney, the Public Defender, the Sheriff, and the Public Health Director in this County.

This the 9<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2020.

  
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Wayland J. Sermons, Jr.  
Senior Resident Superior Court Judge  
Second District COVID-19 Coordinator  
Second Judicial District



## **Responsibility of the Clerk of Court:**

1. The Clerk shall summon 60 jurors designated as Group A jurors to call in after 6 p.m. on the Sunday prior to the Jury trial session to confirm they are to report at 9:30 a.m. the Monday of the trial session.
2. The Clerk shall summon 50 jurors designated as Group B jurors to call in after 6 p.m. on the Sunday prior to the session, as well as to call in Monday after 12:00 p.m. to determine if they are to report at 1:30 p.m.

(Unless offsite Jury Selection is done. If offsite, the clerk shall summon the usual number of Jurors.)

3. The Clerk shall attach to each jury summons a letter from the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, the District Attorney and the Clerk of Court noting the safety measures that have been taken in preparing for the jury session.
4. The Clerk shall submit a copy of the jury summons and letter to the Senior Resident Superior Court Judge for approval prior to mailing to Jurors.
5. The Clerk shall submit a copy of the jury summons and letter for Civil Superior Court sessions to the Chief District Court Judge for approval prior to mailing to Jurors.
6. The Clerk shall, with the County and the Sheriff, ensure that the Courtroom is clearly marked with social distance spacing, for the jury box area and the venire area.
7. The Clerk shall make hand sanitizer available to jurors, the parties, and others present in the courtroom.
8. The Bailiff/Clerk/County shall wipe/replace microphone covers, and the surface area of the witness stand and plexiglass after each witness.



**Responsibility of the County:**

1. Provide temperature screening of all persons entering the Courthouse.
2. Provide hand sanitizer stations for public use in all areas accessed by the public.
3. Provide periodic cleaning throughout the day of high touch areas including without limitation, doorknobs, water fountains, handrails, elevator walls and buttons, bathroom faucets and dispensers, and reception desks or counters.
4. Provide, at least twice daily, cleaning of all courtroom, jury room, Judge's Chambers, and Attorney Rooms. Cleaning shall be conducted before each session begins, and between morning and afternoon sessions of court. If done the day before any session, safeguards will be taken to limit access to the sanitized rooms overnight.
5. The Bailiff/Clerk/County shall wipe/replace microphone covers, and the surface area of the witness stand and plexiglass after each witness.



## **Responsibility of the Sheriff:**

1. With the Clerk and County, ensure all courtroom seating, and deliberation rooms are clearly marked for social distancing, and clearly mark the Jury box in the Courtroom.
2. The Bailiffs will direct the jurors upon entrance into the Courtroom to their seats as provided above.
3. With the County, the Bailiffs shall ensure that all persons entering the Courthouse have a temperature screening.
4. The Bailiffs will ensure that all persons in the courtroom are correctly wearing a face covering at all times.
5. The Bailiffs shall regulate the number of persons in the courtroom, limiting them to authorized and necessary persons only, in consultation with the presiding Judge and the parties.
6. The Bailiff/Clerk/County shall wipe/replace microphone covers, and the surface area of the witness stand and plexiglass after each witness.



## **TO TYRRELL COUNTY JURORS**

The Judicial Branch in Tyrrell County has been working throughout the entire COVID-19 pandemic. We have continued to handle essential matters that keep the citizens of Tyrrell County safe. It is time to return to conducting jury trials, which is why you have received this Notice to Appear.

We understand that these are difficult and perhaps scary times to us all. We want to assure you that our decision to resume jury trials has only been made after careful and comprehensive planning for your safety while performing this important civic duty. These specific steps have been taken to keep us all as safe as possible:

1. We have determined the capacity of our courtrooms or other spaces that you will enter, based on a 6-foot social distancing radius. We require all persons to observe this distancing at all times.
2. All persons in the public areas of the courthouse are required to wear face coverings at all times. If you do not have one it will be provided for you.
3. We have hand sanitizer available at numerous locations for your use as needed.
4. We have reduced the number of people who will be in the courtroom and have reduced the number of the jurors summoned to Court.
5. We will completely sanitize all spaces you will enter or work in, before court, at lunch and after you leave.

All of these precautions have been implemented after consultation with all state, county and local officials.



If you have recently had any symptoms of COVID-19, been exposed to someone with a known case or have been out of the country, please include this information on the Official Jury Summons and return as directed. Please include the date of symptoms or exposure. The symptoms are:

1. Fever greater than 100.4
2. Presently having shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
3. Presently having a cough
4. Presently having chills
5. Presently having muscle pain
6. Presently have a sore throat
7. New loss of taste or smell
8. Close contact to someone who tested positive for COVID-19

You may also indicate if you feel you are at high risk or live with someone who is at high risk of contracting the virus.

While we will not require those in the above categories to serve, we need you for jury service and expect each of you to be present.

We thank you for your service and cooperation as we continue to administer Justice in Tyrrell County.

Wayland J. Sermons, Jr.  
Senior Resident Superior Court Judge  
Second Judicial District

Seth H. Edwards  
District Attorney  
Second Prosecutorial District

Angie Sexton  
Clerk of Superior Court  
Tyrrell County



This plan emphasizes masking, adequate social distancing, and hand washing / sanitizing and it has made every effort to reduce risk to jury participants and staff. It looks good to me.

Thank you -

Wes

**Wes Gray, MAS, MPA, MPH**

Health Director

Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health Department

Roanoke Home Care

252-791-3101

[wes.gray@mtwdh.org](mailto:wes.gray@mtwdh.org)

Good by me.

Seth Edwards

District Attorney

Second prosecutorial district



Seth H. Edwards

District Attorney  
2nd Prosecutorial District

North Carolina Judicial Branch

O 252-940-4010

F 252-940-4011



I approve

Angie E. Sexton

Clerk Superior Court

Tyrrell County

North Carolina Judicial Branch

O 252-766-6540

M 252-394-6169

F 252-766-6511

I approve

Tommy Routten

Chief Public Defender

Districts 1 & 2

I approve.

Sheriff Sawyer

Washington County Sheriff

Sent from my iPhone