

Sparks Justice Court

FILED
ANITA WHITEHEAD, CLERK
SPARKS JUSTICE COURT
MAR 25 2021
By *Anita Whitehead*
DEPUTY CLERK

1 IN THE JUSTICE COURT OF SPARKS TOWNSHIP
2 COUNTY OF WASHOE, STATE OF NEVADA
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5 IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE MATTER OF
6 THE PHASED REOPENING OF THE
7 SPARKS JUSTICE COURT

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 2021-03

8 WHEREAS, on March 12, 2020, Governor Sisolak declared a state of emergency in
9 Nevada in response to the COVID-19 pandemic;

10 WHEREAS, prior Administrative Orders closed the courthouse to the public and
11 limited court proceedings to remote Zoom trials and hearings;

12 WHEREAS, the ongoing vaccination of the public and the success of other preventative
13 measures has reduced the risk of catching the virus;

14 WHEREAS, the Truckee Meadows COVID Risk Meter has generally shown a
15 declining risk to the public;

16 WHEREAS, it is time to begin the process of opening the Sparks Justice Court for
17 public access in a phased manner, applying necessary limitations on the number of people in
18 the courthouse and implementing social distancing rules with disinfecting safeguards; and

19 WHEREAS, the Chief Judge of the Sparks Justice Court has the authority pursuant to
20 NRS 4.157(c) to make administrative decisions pertaining to the business of the Court.

21 AND GOOD CAUSE BEING SHOWN,

22 IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

23 1. Access Requirements

24 Everyone entering the courthouse will be screened by security for temperature and
25 asked about possible COVID-19 exposure. Anyone with a temperature over 100.4
degrees or who answers yes to any of the exposure questions will not be allowed to

1 enter. Appropriate masks will be worn by everyone in public areas of the courthouse at
2 all times.

3 2. Public Counters

4 As of March 15, 2021, the lobby and public counters have been open to the public. No
5 more than one person for each department (civil, criminal, and citations) can be at the
6 counter at any one time. The bailiffs can provide a public laptop for Zoom access to
7 anyone unable to connect to a hearing. No more than five people will be in the lobby
8 area at one time. If the lobby is at capacity, members of the public will have to wait
9 outside or in their vehicles.

10 3. Limited In-Person Trials

11 As of April 5, 2021, the Court will schedule one in-person misdemeanor trial on
12 Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday mornings. Each trial will be limited to one deputy
13 district attorney, one defense counsel, one defendant, one witness, the clerk, and the
14 judge in the courtroom. Additional witnesses will be required to wait outside or in their
15 vehicles until called. The witness stand will be disinfected between each witness and
16 the Court will take breaks at least once an hour for additional cleaning and air
17 circulation. Other than the brief removal of a mask by a witness or defendant for
18 identification purposes, everyone in the courtroom will wear masks at all times. The
19 entire courtroom will be disinfected between cases.

20 4. Public Access

21 Public access to trials and hearings will be limited to viewing the proceeding via the
22 Court's YouTube channel. The Court may consider allowing viewing over a media
23 device in the lobby if capacity limits have not otherwise been reached.

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1 5. Preliminary Hearings

2 Preliminary hearings will continue to be held by Zoom unless counsel proffers a
3 sufficient reason to the Court why it needs to be held in person. This restriction will be
4 eased upon the Court's approval and after the Truckee Meadows COVID Risk Meter
5 drops to a low risk level.

6 6. Stacked Calendar; Prioritization

7 Additional trials will be scheduled as the risk meter drops. The Court will consider
8 stacking trials and preliminary hearings as necessary to manage the calendar. Criminal
9 matters will be prioritized for in-person hearings until the backlog is cleared.

10 7. Civil Cases

11 All civil matters including civil trials, small claims hearings, evictions, and protective
12 order hearings will continue to be heard by Zoom until notified otherwise.

13 8. Traffic Cases

14 All traffic matters including arraignments, pretrial hearings, and trials will continue to
15 be heard by Zoom until notified otherwise.

16 9. Inmate Transports

17 Until further notice, inmates will only be transported to the Sparks Justice Court for in-
18 person trials or preliminary hearings. As restrictions ease, the Court will authorize their
19 transport for other matters, including entry of a plea, orders to show cause, and other
20 dispositive matters.

21 10. Jury Trials

22 The Court will begin to schedule jury trials, no more than one per week, later this
23 summer. This is contingent on the COVID risk level, the jury commissioner's ability to
24 call a venire for the justice courts, and the completion of social distancing measures for
25 the jury assembly room and trial court.

1 11. Motions to Set

2 The Court will no longer require motions to set trials or Zoom preliminary hearings. A
3 request for an in-person preliminary hearing must be made by motion or stipulation and
4 based upon good cause.

5 This Administrative Order 2021-03 shall stay in full force and effect until amended or
6 rescinded by the Sparks Justice Court.

7 IT IS SO ORDERED.

8 Dated this 25th day of March 2021.

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11 Chief Judge Kevin Higgins
12 Justice of the Peace