

IN THE 25TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR IN-PERSON COURT PROCEEDINGS FOR RIPLEY CITY COURT

In Response to the COVID-19 pandemic the Tennessee Supreme Court on March 13, 2020 and as Amended on March 25, 2020, SUSPENDED "in-person" court proceedings, except under limited conditions. These restrictions applied to trial courts of record, general sessions, juvenile courts, and municipal courts. But whereas the Tennessee Supreme Court has recently modified the suspension of in-person court proceedings but has also Ordered that social distancing and other efforts remain in place including limiting persons in the courtroom, scheduling cases at staggered times, arranging for separate rooms for witnesses and other measures designed to limit people from being in close proximity to one another, in accordance with the Tennessee Supreme Court order filed on April 24, 2020, Ripley City Court hereby establishes the following protocols for implementing the gradual controlled return to "in-person" proceedings in Ripley City Court.

Ripley City Court presently hears cases involving violations of municipal ordinances. There will be no in-person court proceedings held until June 1, 2020 except those regarding code violations which potentially jeopardize the public safety and welfare.

Ripley City Court will utilize any **available** means other than in-person court hearings, such as telephonic hearings, for instance, to achieve the ends of justice.

Beginning June 1, 2020, in-person proceedings will be conducted with appropriate safety measures, and the following guidelines will apply to Ripley City Court:

A. PERSONS PERMITTED TO APPEAR DURING "IN-PERSON" PROCEEDINGS

Subject to the safety protocols identified in other parts of this order, Ripley City Court will permit only personnel essential to the functions of the Court and the immediate parties to the action, along with their counsel and necessary witnesses, to be present in the Courtroom during "in-person" proceedings.

B. SAFETY PROTOCOLS TO BE FOLLOWED DURING IN-PERSON HEARINGS

During in-person proceedings, Ripley City Court will adhere to the following public-safety protocols:

1. ADVANCED SCREENING OF ALL PERSONS ENTERING THE CITY COURT BUILDING

All persons shall be screened prior to entry to help ensure that symptoms are not currently present, and to help ensure that other risk factors are not present. Each person shall be asked to report on the information below, and no person will be allowed admittance who answers affirmatively to any category of information:

1. Persons who presently or have exhibited health conditions in the previous twenty-four (24) hours involving a fever over 100.4, a persistent cough, any shortness of breath, any persistent chest pain, or bluish lips or face. Temperatures may be checked with a no contact thermometer.
2. Persons who have been diagnosed with, or have had contact with, anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the past fourteen (14) days.
3. Persons who have been asked to self-quarantine by any doctor, hospital, or health agency.

4. Persons who have had a recent onset of loss of taste or smell.

2. **USE OF SOCIAL DISTANCING IN THE COURTROOM**

The number of persons in a courtroom (exclusive of the judge, court personnel, and court security) shall not exceed 10 people.

Ripley City Court will instruct on and enforce social distancing within the Courtroom, and signage instructing persons on the social distancing protocols shall be placed throughout the building to advise visitors of said protocols.

Ripley Police Department security personnel and/or other appropriate city employees shall ensure that all persons in the hallways and common areas within the Ripley City Court building are abiding by the social distancing guidelines.

All persons allowed in the Courtroom or waiting area must maintain a 6 feet distance from each other, absent a need to communicate more closely. Those participants who meet the criteria to be present in the Courtroom will sit in designated spaces.

The judge, court personnel, and court security shall be positioned at least 6 feet apart from each other. Further, only one litigant and his/her attorney may approach counsel table at a time.

Court officers are charged with ensuring compliances with these requirements.

3. AVAILABILITY OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Ripley City Court will strongly encourage the use of face masks which cover nose and mouth. No hats, caps, or any other headgear, except as medically necessary will be allowed. Coverings will be worn for health purposes only.

The use of hand sanitizer will be required. Hand sanitizer will be placed in accessible areas.

The Courtroom will be sanitized at least 30 minutes prior to each use and at hourly intervals during the day when in use; and at the conclusion of each day's proceedings. Sanitation measures will include the wiping of all surfaces with proper disinfectants. All court staff, with the exception of the Judge shall wear masks in common areas while court is in session.

All guidelines, schedules and protocols are subject to modification by the Supreme Court, or the Presiding Judge of the Twenty-Fifth Judicial District of Tennessee.