

**TRAVIS COUNTY 261<sup>st</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT  
RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR REMOTE HEARINGS**

IT IS ORDERED THAT all persons comply with these Rules and Procedures. **Any person's failure to comply with these Rules and Procedures may be subject to contempt of court. A finding of contempt of court may be punished by confinement in jail, fines or other sanctions.**

**Procedures for Litigants and Participants**

1. Rules and Procedures are Cumulative.
  - a. These Rules and Procedures are cumulative with The Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, Texas Rules of Evidence and Travis County Local Rules, which are applicable in all remote hearings.
  - b. All participants in the hearing shall comply with Local Rule Chapter 12 in both conduct and appearance.

2. Hearing Platform. All remote hearings will be conducted by Zoom videoconference.

It is free to download at [zoom.us](https://zoom.us) or is available as an app on your cell phone, tablet, or mobile device:

iOS – <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/id546505307>

Android –

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=us.zoom.videomeetings>

To participate in a hearing, no account need be created.

3. Device Requirements. To participate in videoconferencing, your computer, phone, tablet, or device must have (1) internet access, (2) a video camera and (3) a microphone.

For participants who cannot meet these requirements, a telephone number will be provided to participate by telephone.

Prior to the hearing, each participant should test your internet connection, camera, and microphone with Zoom through a test meeting at <https://zoom.us/test>.

4. Participant Access to Zoom. For each hearing, a separate meeting will be created and only the counsel, litigants, witnesses, and participants will be provided the meeting ID and allowed to attend the hearing through Zoom.

Any person who receives the meeting ID or access information may not disseminate the information to the public or post it on any public forums or social media.

While the Zoom meetings are closed to only participants of a hearings, all hearings (except those allowed by Texas law and ordered by the Judge to be closed) will be available to the public in the manner described below.

**VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDING OF THE HEARING IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.**

5. Setting up the Hearing

- a. Three business days prior to the hearing. Each party must provide the contact information sheet attached to the Rules as Appendix A to the 261<sup>st</sup> Judicial Executive Assistant, [mary.lawson@traviscountytx.gov](mailto:mary.lawson@traviscountytx.gov).
- b. Two business days prior to the hearing.
  - i. The Court will email each counsel and self-represented litigant the information required to access the Zoom meeting and the shared Box folder described below.

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH LITIGANT TO ENSURE THAT ALL WITNESSES THEY INTEND TO CALL RECEIVE NOTICE OF HOW TO JOIN THE ZOOM MEETING.

- c. One business day prior to the hearing. By no later than 5:00 p.m. on the business day before the hearing, the parties are required to submit the exhibits that the party intends to offer at the hearing in accordance with Section 6 below.

6. Evidence.

- a. Witness and Exhibit List. On the day prior to the hearing, each party must provide a witness list and an exhibit list to all other parties; the 261<sup>st</sup> Judicial Executive Assistant, [mary.lawson@traviscountytx.gov](mailto:mary.lawson@traviscountytx.gov) and to the Court Reporter, [Lasonya.gay@traviscountytx.gov](mailto:Lasonya.gay@traviscountytx.gov). Each party must also upload a copy of the exhibit list to the shared Box folder in a separate file title “[Party’s] Exhibit List.”
- b. Box.com. On the day prior to the hearing, the Court will provide each counsel and self-represented litigant a link and invitation to a shared Box folder for uploading exhibits that a party intends to offer at the hearing. Any person uploading exhibits to the shared Box folder must create a Box account, which can be free to use.
- c. Exhibit Format and Filenames. Each exhibit must be a separate file and in PDF format. Each file must be titled with that exhibit’s number (e.g. Plaintiff’s Exhibit 1, Respondent’s Exhibit 4, etc.). Do NOT combine multiple exhibits into a single file. Do NOT attach your exhibits to your exhibit list. The first page must be marked with the exhibit number that matches the filename. Exhibits should be numbered and not lettered (e.g. Plaintiff’s Exhibit 1 but NOT Plaintiff’s Exhibit A). If multiple parties share the same designation (e.g. multiple plaintiffs), the parties shall ensure that each exhibit is uniquely titled to clearly denote the submitting party.
- d. Email. Box is the preferred method of uploading proposed exhibits. However, if a party is unable to use Box, that party must, by no later 3 p.m. the day before the hearing, email their proposed exhibits to all other parties; the 261<sup>st</sup> Judicial Executive Assistant, [mary.lawson@traviscountytx.gov](mailto:mary.lawson@traviscountytx.gov) and to the Court Reporter, [Lasonya.gay@traviscountytx.gov](mailto:Lasonya.gay@traviscountytx.gov).

The subject of the email should be the Full Cause No. and Plaintiff's Exhibits/Defendant's Exhibits (e.g. Cause No. D-1-GN-20-000001, Smith v. Jones, Plaintiff's Exhibits). A party submitting exhibits by email must comply with Section 6(c), Exhibit Format and Filenames.

EMAILS MAY BE SUBJECT TO FILE SIZE RESTRICTIONS AND NOT RECEIVED BY THE COURT (See Section 6(e) below).

- e. Failure to Upload or Provide. It is the litigants' responsibility to ensure that all offered exhibits are timely received by the Court. The failure to timely provide an exhibit may result in the exclusion of the exhibit or the inability of the Court to consider the exhibit. Additionally, failure to follow these procedures for providing exhibits may result in the exhibits not being included in the record.
- f. Additional Materials. Prior to the time of the hearing, the parties may, by email to all parties and to the 261<sup>st</sup> Judicial Executive Assistant, [mary.lawson@traviscountytexas.gov](mailto:mary.lawson@traviscountytexas.gov), provide non-evidentiary materials including courtesy copies of pleadings, caselaw, proposed orders, demonstratives, presentations, trial briefs, and/or "trial notebooks," if any. Materials emailed to the Court will not be filed by the Court and it is the litigants' responsibility to ensure that the appropriate materials are filed before the hearing begins.

UPLOADING TO BOX OR EMAILING TO COURT STAFF DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN OFFER OR ADMISSION OF ANY EXHIBIT. ANY EXHIBIT NOT OFFERED DURING THE HEARING WILL BE DELETED FROM THE BOX SHARED FOLDER AND NOT INCLUDED IN THE RECORD. UPLOADING OR PROVIDING OTHER MATERIALS DOES NOT CONSTITUTE FILING WITH DISTRICT CLERK'S OFFICE. ANY DOCUMENT REQUIRED TO BE FILED MUST STILL BE FILED WITH THE CLERK'S OFFICE.

7. At the Hearing.

a. Testimony.

- i. The parties are encouraged, to the extent possible, to agree to the presentation of testimony through affidavits or deposition transcripts.
- ii. No participant to the hearing may engage in private chat or messaging with a witness during their testimony. Witnesses, including parties when testifying, must close or minimize their chat window so it is not viewable during their testimony.
- iii. Exhibits. Any references to exhibits during the hearing should be using the "share screen" function of Zoom with the only exhibits shown being those proposed pre-marked exhibits in a party's Box subfolder for submitting proposed exhibits or admitted exhibits placed in a subfolder on Box for admitted exhibits, titled "Offered and Admitted."

8. Communications with the Court or Court Staff. All counsel or self-represented litigants must be copied on all correspondence with the Court and the court staff including the

Judicial Executive Assistant and the Court Reporter. In the Zoom meeting, no participant may privately message the Judge or court staff.

9. Meet and Confer. Prior to submitting the contact information sheet in Section 5(a), the parties are required to meet and confer in an attempt to resolve the matter to be heard by the Court.

**For The Public**

1. Pursuant to the Open Courts provision of the Texas Constitution, all open court proceedings will be streamed and available on the 261<sup>st</sup> District Court's YouTube Channel:

Travis County 261<sup>st</sup> District Court

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UClYtLgXTXDaHawKmXOkoGw>

An account is not required to view the Court's livestreams. For the direct URL for a particular hearing, a person may contact the 261<sup>st</sup> Judicial Executive Assistant, [mary.lawson@traviscountytexas.gov](mailto:mary.lawson@traviscountytexas.gov).

Through this platform, the public may view or listen to proceedings but **VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDING IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.**

2. The Court's hearing schedule for the following week will be uploaded on the Court's website each Friday.