

46th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT
Taney County, Missouri

JEFFREY M. MERRELL
PRESIDING JUDGE

CHERYL PETERSON
SECRETARY TO PRESIDING JUDGE

Post Office Box 129
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March 20, 2020

RE: 46th Judicial Circuit and Taney County Judicial Center

In the wake of national and state emergencies having been declared following the classification of COVID-19 as a pandemic, the Taney County Judicial Center, in Forsyth – like most other courts – has made changes to the way work is done. Our local courts, and the judges who preside over them, are aware that people involved in litigation are anxious to have their respective cases move toward resolution. With that in mind, at this time, the Circuit Court of Taney County is remaining open. Here are a few of the things we are doing in Taney County:

- First and foremost, the safety of our community and our employees here at the Taney County Judicial Center require limiting personal contact as much as possible, while still processing the most-critical court business.
- We are taking every opportunity to advise and encourage the public to stay at home. We are re-setting non-emergency court matters to a later date. If you need information about re-scheduling your case or cases, please 1) contact your attorney, 2) file a motion for continuance, or 3) if unrepresented, call the Circuit Court Clerk's Office at 417-546-7230.
- Our judges are conducting criminal hearings with inmates from jail by video, while re-scheduling criminal hearings where the defendants are out of custody. Additionally, the Sheriff is working with the Prosecuting Attorney to carefully screen defendants being extradited to our local jail from outside the area, in order to best protect our citizens.
- Court security staff are screening people trying to enter the judicial center in an effort to determine whether those people have essential, emergency matters to attend to. In some cases, people can be told their respective case has been re-scheduled, and in others, a determination can be made whether or not the matter is actually an emergency. This helps to allow our courts to accommodate the processing of essential business while limiting potential dangers of exposure to numerous people.
- Our desire was to have the Court security staff use a digital infrared body non-contact thermometer to test people attempting to enter the facility. Unfortunately, such thermometers – like many essential community safety and medical devices – are in short supply, and we have been unable to obtain such a thermometer for these screenings.
- We have quashed jury trials scheduled for the next month, in order to avoid unnecessary crowds.
- All non-emergency hearings in civil cases have been re-scheduled.
- Many cases are still being handled by telephone, video, or other non-contact means.

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- Court staff has been working on a rotation so that some employees are here in the office to conduct essential business, while others are staying at home. This has helped our offices avoid having personal contact with groups of 5 or 10 or more.
- Municipal courts (Branson, Hollister, and Forsyth) within the 46th Judicial Circuit have temporarily suspended their respective court hearings, in observance of the March 16, 2020, Order of the Missouri Supreme Court. Please contact those respective city offices with any questions about municipal court dates.

Please call the Taney County Circuit Court Clerk's Office if you want to find out about re-setting your case, or check the status of your case on Missouri casenet.

Our team will continue to monitor this evolving situation and make changes as needed. Thank you for your cooperation in trying to keep our community and judicial staff safe.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey M. Merrell
Presiding Judge
46th Judicial Circuit
Taney County, Missouri