

Upon review of the “Guidelines for Resuming Jury Trials” and other relevant material listed in the Appendix of the Sixth Order, and upon consideration of the facilities available for use in Crawford County and the circumstances particular to the county, the Committee has established the present plan for resumption of jury trials.

Facilities:

The Committee has determined that while the Crawford County Courthouse has sufficient space for jury and bench trials, it does not have adequate space to comply with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (“CDC”) social distancing guidelines in the context of jury selection for such trials in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the Committee has designated the Conference Center Building located behind the Crawford County Government Complex, located at 640 GA-128, Roberta, Crawford County, Georgia 31078, as the alternate location for holding preliminary jury selection for all jury trials. That facility consists of an auditorium that will seat approximately 100 people in a normal seating arrangement that will be adequate for jury selection. It also contains adequate spacing for counsel, security, court staff, and all other essential personnel to be present during the jury selection process while still maintaining adequate social distancing protocols. The conference center contains restrooms and a large additional area separate from the main room where counsel and client(s) may wait or conference outside the presence of the Court or potential jurors.

While the Conference Center will be used for jury selection, the Committee has determined that the Crawford County Courthouse, located at 100 GA-42, Knoxville, Crawford County, Georgia 31050, has sufficient space for the commission of the jury trial itself.

Jury Selection Procedure:

When the suspension of jury trials is lifted, the Superior Court will initiate procedures for conducting jury trials in criminal cases; the priority will be based on the age and severity of the case.

For those cases to be tried, the Clerk of Superior Court will summon approximately 150 potential jurors. Each summons will include a letter from the Court informing the prospective juror of the precautions which have been taken to ensure their safety, and of the guidelines they must follow while in attendance. Each summons will also include a juror information form. On this form, prospective jurors will provide their contact information (name, address, cell phone, and email), answer a COVID-19 questionnaire, provide other juror information, and answer statutory qualification questions. Prospective jurors will be instructed to fill out this juror information form in advance of their reporting day and bring the completed form with them when reporting for jury selection.

Prospective jurors will be directed to report directly to the auditorium at the Crawford County Conference Center on the set date. The auditorium will act as the jury selection room. The summons will include the time for each juror to report. The sidewalks and hallways of the premises will all be marked with tape to allow for social distancing of at least six feet, and seating within the building will be spaced at six feet or more. Hand sanitizer will be placed at the entrance of each room and within each room to be used as needed. Masks will be required to be worn upon entering the building and when in the hallways. Prospective jurors will be stopped upon entering the building, where an individual will be checking temperatures and dispensing face shields and masks (if the prospective juror does not already have a mask).

Once all reporting jurors have been screened and seated, the Court will administer the oath, explain the procedure to be followed, and entertain excuses from jurors regarding their service for the week. A handheld microphone may be utilized to hear the jurors clearly, if necessary. This microphone will be cleansed by court personnel wearing gloves in between each use. After the Court entertains excuses, the attorneys will begin their voir dire process. Once a jury of twelve (and two alternates) has been selected from the panel of jurors, those remaining from the panel will be given further instructions for reporting at a later date, if necessary, for the completion of the trial term. The

remaining jury of twelve (and two alternates) will be instructed on when and where to report for service, and then be dismissed for the rest of the day. Once the entire first panel of jurors has been dismissed, the seats in the auditorium will be cleansed in accordance with CDC guidelines before any additional panel of jurors arrives.

Trial Procedure:

The normal procedure for conducting jury trials will be modified to some extent. For example, each witness must wear a mask during their testimony. During breaks, jurors will either be escorted outside the building, or allowed to enter the jury deliberation/break room with a bailiff present. If it is necessary to discuss a matter on the record but outside of the jury's presence, the jury will be escorted into the jury deliberation/break room to wait. Once the jury receives the case for deliberation, they will be escorted to the jury deliberation/break room to deliberate. For those trials lasting several days, jurors will be appropriately screened each morning when they report to the Crawford County Courthouse. There will be ample room in the courtroom for social distancing at all times for all necessary parties and court participants, and additional safety precautions will be taken as needed.

As for access by the public, because social distancing must be maintained, priority will be given to family members of the accused and the alleged victim(s). In the event socially distanced capacity has been reached in the courtroom, others wishing to attend the trial will be given a link to view a livestream of the proceeding at a remote location on their own device(s).

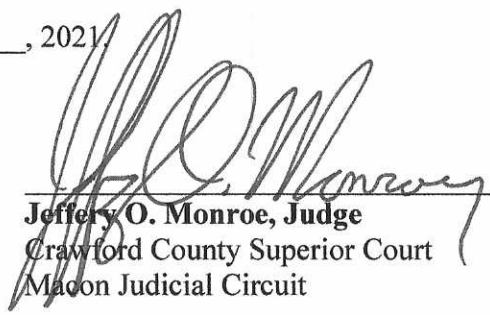
Concerning sanitation, bailiffs will be responsible for providing clear face shields to each witness as they enter the courtroom to testify and spraying disinfectant or otherwise sanitizing the witness chair and surrounding surfaces after each witness testifies. The courtroom will be thoroughly cleansed at the end of each day's proceedings. With regards to exhibits and demonstrative evidence,

overhead projection will be used to the extent consistent with the rules of evidence; otherwise, gloves will be provided for handling these items.

Notification:

These guidelines will be made available to the public well in advance of the trial week. In addition to being posted on the Crawford County Clerk of Court website, a copy will also be provided to those attorneys whose cases are to be tried.

SO ORDERED this 17th day of May, 2021.



Jeffery O. Monroe, Judge
Crawford County Superior Court
Macon Judicial Circuit