

VIDEO CONFERENCING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR HEARINGS IN THE 240TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT OF FORT BEND COUNTY, TEXAS

The 240th Judicial District Court of Fort Bend County, Texas is now conducting video conference hearings through the WEB EX application. The following policies and procedures apply to the 240th Judicial District Court and are effective immediately until further notice from the Court.

The 240th Judicial District Court will conduct hearings by video conference using the WEB EX platform approved by our County IT department. To participate in the WEB EX hearing, you must have an electronic device with an internet connection. You must use a smart phone, iPad/tablet, or desktop/laptop computer with a built-in webcam/microphone. It shall be the responsibility of counsel and self-represented parties to download the WEB EX app prior to a proceeding and to ensure that all hearings participants have the ability to participate. In accordance with the Open Courts Provision of the Texas Constitution, ALL hearings are livestreamed to the Court's webpage at: www.fortbendcountytexas.gov

STEPS TO OBTAIN A HEARING:

- Request a hearing date and time by contacting the Court Coordinator, Sheila Shifferly, at 240dc@fortbendcountytexas.gov. You MUST indicate in your hearing request the following:
 1. The type of hearing requested;
 2. Whether an interpreter is necessary and the required language;
 3. The anticipated length of the entire hearing; and
 4. The names of all those (attorneys, litigants/defendants, and witnesses) who will be participating in the hearing. If counsel of record will be sending co-counsel, local counsel or an associate to conduct the hearing, please notify the court.

PROCEDURES FOR THE WEBEX HEARING:

- The scheduling party is responsible for noticing all parties.
- The scheduling party is responsible for cancelling the setting with the Court if a hearing is no longer necessary, and shall notice all other parties of cancellation.
- **All of the usual in-person courtroom decorum, demeanor, and dress code rules shall apply.**
- Participants in the WEB EX hearing should minimize outside noise and distractions.
- Official Exhibits must be submitted to Elizabeth Wittu, Official Court Reporter, no later than three (3) days prior to the hearing via email at Elizabeth.Wittu@fortbendcountytexas.gov and 240dc@fortbendcountytexas.gov
The only formats accepted are PDF for documents, JPEG and PNG for images, and MP4 for audio and videos. No DOC formats or executables will be accepted. Please use separate PDF files. Please ensure that the cause number and style of the case appear in the email subject line when submitting your exhibits. **DO NOT EFILE EXHIBITS. EFILE ONLY THE EXHIBIT LIST.** Parties/Counsel should attempt to reach stipulations regarding exhibit admissibility **before** the hearing. **FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE PROCEDURE MAY RESULT IN EXHIBIT EXCLUSION.**
- Parties are responsible for providing exhibits to opposing counsel/parties prior to the hearing.
- During the hearing, the Court will not be responsible for displaying exhibits through the WEB EX app. The attorneys will be responsible to ensure their exhibits are capable of being displayed via the ‘Share Screen’ feature of the WEB EX app, and will be expected to do so without delaying the hearing.
- Parties are responsible for the logistics of their remote appearance. Technical difficulties that are not timely resolved may result in a hearing being passed.
- **IT IS ORDERED THAT RECORDING OF REMOTE WEBEX PROCEEDINGS IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN.** Attorneys, self-represented parties, witnesses, and attendees participating in remote hearings, or members of the public viewing a livestream, are prohibited from recording, capturing, saving, broadcasting, televising, or photographing the proceeding in any manner. **FAILURE TO ABIDE BY THIS ORDER MAY RESULT IN CONTEMPT OF COURT PROCEEDINGS.**
- **Request for an official record, please contact the Court Reporter at Elizabeth.Wittu@fortbendcountytexas.gov.**
- All hearings conducted through the WEBEX platform are subject to additional instructions as deemed appropriate by the Court during the time of hearing.