

Procedure for Conducting Hearings During the Covid-19 Protocol Period

Updated July 16, 2020

Due to the increase in Covid-19 cases throughout the United States - specifically in the Alexandria and Monroe Divisions - and considering the fluidity of the recommended social distancing practices and the uncertainty regarding the ability of persons to safely assemble in the Courtroom during the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Court will be evaluating circumstances in both of its divisions on a weekly basis as well as on a case-by-case basis to determine whether hearings will be conducted telephonically or whether counsel will be permitted to make in-person appearances, for attorneys only. **NO DEBTORS OR WITNESSES SHALL APPEAR WITHOUT COURT APPROVAL.**

Matters should continue to be Noticed for the particular times assigned for each type of motion, but effective immediately, Notices shall include the following provision in bold type: **COURT BEGINS AT 9:30 A.M., HOWEVER, THE MATTER WILL BE CALLED, AS GROUPED BY ATTORNEY, IN THE ORDER IN WHICH IT APPEARS ON THE COURT'S FINAL DOCKET WHICH WILL BE POSTED TO THE COURT'S PUBLIC WEBSITE THE AFTERNOON BEFORE COURT.**

The web address is: www.lawb.uscourts.gov, then select the "Judges" tab and then "Judge Wheelis."

For Hearings in Cases filed under Chapters 7, 11, and 12 and Adversary Proceedings in the Alexandria Division:

Please refer to the Court's link on this page titled "Alexandria Chapters 7/11/12/AP Calendars," which is updated on the day before the scheduled hearing, to determine whether a matter remains on the Court's docket. The Court will determine on a case-by-case basis whether the hearing will be held telephonically or by in-person appearances by counsel through emails from Chambers to all counsel prior to the posting of the docket. Attorneys who have questions regarding appearances for upcoming hearings should contact Jennifer Sues or Jennifer Johnson in Chambers.

For Hearings in Chapter 13 Cases in the Alexandria and Monroe Divisions:

Please refer to the Court's link on this page titled "Alexandria Chapter 13 Calendars" or "Monroe Chapter 13 Calendars," respectively, which are updated on the day before the scheduled hearings, to determine whether a matter remains on the Court's docket. The Court will determine on a weekly basis and the Court's calendar posted to the website will reflect whether the hearings will be held telephonically or by in-person appearances by counsel. Attorneys who have questions regarding appearances for upcoming hearings should contact Jennifer Sues or Jennifer Johnson in Chambers.

Whether the hearings are conducted in-person or telephonically, the matters will be called according to the Court's posted calendar, which is sorted and grouped by Debtors' counsel. Each attorney for the Debtor will have a specific call-in or appearance time assigned to their matters. This call-in or appearance time is approximate. When you call-in, please remain silent until your matter is called or otherwise prompted by the Court, as the Court may still be conducting hearings in the prior time slot. Counsel for Creditors should review the Court's posted and re-sorted docket to determine in what order their matters will be called and should appear or dial in accordingly. The Court and the Chapter 13 Trustee will remain on the call throughout all hearings.

If your matter is to be conducted telephonically, please refer to the following instructions to participate:

1. Dial 1-877-336-1831 at the time reflected on the Court's calendar published on the website the day before court.
2. Enter access code 5893351, and then Press #
3. You are now entered in the conference call as a participant.
4. Once court has begun, you will be requested to make your appearance on the record as your case or cases are called. Please mute your line until you make your appearance.

If your hearing will be conducted in the Courtroom with counsel or any other allowed litigants appearing in-person:

1. Matters noticed for each hearing date will be sorted and grouped into time slots for each Debtors' counsel. (Eg. All hearings for John Doe on that date will be called at a designated time; All hearings for Jane Doe will then be called at a separate designated time, and so forth until all matters are heard for that day).
2. Lecterns and microphones in the courtroom will be spaced at a maximum distance, please have only one person per microphone. Sanitary wipes and disinfectant are available for use in the courtroom.
3. All parties are asked to space themselves in the courtroom chairs at least 6 feet apart from other persons or outside the courtroom in conference areas as necessary until your matter is called.
4. The wearing of masks is required by all persons while in the public areas of the courthouse and the courtroom.