

# **LOCAL RULES OF COURT AND RULES OF DECORUM** **LIBERTY HILL MUNICIPAL COURT**

## **I. AUTHORITY**

Under the inherent power and duty of all Texas courts as codified in Section 21.002, Texas Government Code, the following "Local Rules of Court and Rules of Decorum" shall apply and govern all proceedings before the Liberty Hill Municipal Court in Williamson County, Texas.

## **II. FORMAL OPENING**

Each session of Court shall be brought by announcement of the Bailiff, Court Clerk, or other officer of the court, requiring all to rise as the Judge takes the bench.

## **III. ATTIRE**

All attire shall be appropriate to show respect to the Court. All court participants shall remove hats, caps, or any materials that cover their head when entering the courtroom, except religious hats or materials, such as yamakas, turbans, or chunis. All shirts will be tucked in. Clothing that would be considered unacceptable includes, but is not limited to:

- A. Shorts, cut-offs, bathing suits.
- B. Low-cut blouses or tops.
- C. Skirts or dresses that are short (less than halfway from knee to top of thigh).
- D. Muscle shirts, shirts with no sleeves, undershirts, clothing with lewd, sexual, offensive, vulgar, racist, sexist, obscene, or sexually suggestive words, slogans, depictions, or pictures, including grotesque creatures.
- E. Clothing that is dirty, torn, or ragged.
- F. Clothing that is too tight, too short, excessively baggy, pant waists worn below the waist.
- G. Hats, caps, or bandanas.
- H. Dirty or muddy shoes/boots, open toed sandals, and flip flops.

## **IV. CONSENT TO SEARCH**

All persons entering the court lobby, court facilities, and courtroom consent to search of their persons and all property in their possession by their entry into the court building and courtroom and there is no requirement of probable cause to search any person or property in the court lobby, court foyer, and courtroom in order to ensure the safety and security of court personnel and all other persons in the courtroom and court facility.

## **V. CONDUCT REQUIRED OF COUNSEL AND PRO-SE DEFENDANTS**

1. Individuals who are representing themselves ("pro-se" parties) should be prepared to present their cases in a proper manner. It is not the Court's duty or responsibility to instruct, protect or represent pro-se litigants on proper court procedures, evidence, rules or how to present and prove your case. If you are unprepared, unaware, or not knowledgeable in presenting

your case, this could adversely affect your ability to defend yourself and/or present your case. A pro-se defendant accepts all of the risks inherent in representing themselves without benefit of legal counsel. It is more prudent to employ an experienced attorney to represent you in all legal matters.

2. Attorneys shall observe the letter and spirit of all canons of ethics, including those concerning improper *ex-parte* communications with the Judge and with those dealing with discussion of cases with representatives of the media.
3. Attorneys shall advise their clients and witnesses of the Rules of Decorum and Conduct that may be applicable to them.
4. Pro-se defendants who are representing themselves without retaining an attorney shall conform their behavior to all provisions applicable to Attorneys.
5. Counsel shall be dressed appropriately while in attendance of the Court, which means a coat and tie with dress slacks, socks, and dress shoes or dress cowboy boots for men and dress, blouse and skirt, or business dress slacks and dress shoes for women. No blue jeans will be worn by counsel. Defendants shall be dressed in slacks and button down shirts with dress shoes or dress boots and no blue jeans or shorts or short sleeve shirts or t-shirts shall be worn in the courtroom.
6. All parties shall be prompt in arriving for Court and in attending to Court business. Any party who arrives late may risk the issuance of a warrant if they are not present when the docket is called after Court goes into session.
7. Attorneys are not excused for arriving late even if in another Court, unless previous arrangements and approval of the Judge has been given.
8. Attorneys and pro-se litigants agree to appear for all hearings and court dates set by the Court, whether such notice was given to them by the Judge in open court or given to them by the Court Clerk at the Judge's direction via fax, first class mail, via telephone, or via telephone voicemail message.
9. Attorneys and pro-se litigants understand that they are not excused from attending court hearings or trials simply based upon the filing of a motion for continuance or a request for continuance. Only if a motion for continuance has been granted by the court is a litigant or their attorney excused from appearing.
10. In the event there is a personal emergency or weather-related emergency that prohibits a party or attorney from appearing in court the party or attorney shall immediately call the court and send a fax with a sworn affidavit, under oath, explaining the failure to appear in court with specific facts as to the reason why that party or attorney was unable to appear.
11. An attorney or defendant's previous commitment to appear in another court is not a legitimate reason to appear late or fail to appear in this court. If you have another court

hearing or appearance that conflicts with your setting in this court, it is incumbent on you and your attorney to ask this court or the other court for a re-set.

12. All parties and all persons in the courtroom shall rise when the Judge enters the courtroom and shall remain standing until the Judge or Bailiff announces, "be seated" or until the Judge is seated. The same procedure shall be followed when the judge announces a recess or conclusion of court proceedings and the judge exits the courtroom.
13. Once a party has entered the courtroom and is appearing before the Court, he/she shall not leave without obtaining permission from the Judge or Bailiff.
14. The State shall be seated at the counsel table nearest the jury. Counsel for the defendant and pro-se defendants shall be seated at the other counsel table in the courtroom.
15. Counsel for the defendant and pro-se defendants shall utilize microphones as instructed by the Court in proceedings when a record of the proceedings is being made electronically.
16. No audio or visual electronic recordings shall be made of any court proceedings, hearings, or trials. The recording of any court proceedings is prohibited unless the Presiding Judge approves of this, after a written request. The use of any cell phone device, camera, video recorder, smart phone, laptop, thinkpad, electronic tablet, and any other electronic devices capable of recording is prohibited in the courtroom. Any person caught recording proceedings without previous approval from the Presiding Judge may be held in contempt of court and may have their recording device seized.
17. All remarks of counsel to the Court shall be addressed to the Court formally ("Judge" or "Your Honor").
18. The Court and opposing parties shall address each other and members of the jury without familiarity. The use of first names shall be avoided. Address the Court as "Judge" or "Your Honor". Address opposing parties, counsel, witnesses, and Court Officers as "Mr.", "Mrs.", "Miss", "Officer", etc. Do not use first names, except with children.
19. All objections, arguments, and other comments shall be directed to the Judge and not to opposing counsel. Once a party has made an objection, the other party shall stop and wait for the Judge to make a ruling on the objection before proceeding further.
20. Objections shall be in proper legal form and shall comply with the Texas Rules of Evidence or other laws of this State. Argument will not be entertained upon an objection except with the Court's permission. Do not thank the judge for his/her ruling on an objection.
21. In addressing the Court or jury, counsel and pro-se litigants shall rise and remain standing at their positions at counsel table.
22. When questioning a witness, counsel and pro-se litigants shall remain at counsel table and shall not attempt to approach the bench or witness unless permission is granted by the Judge.

23. Counsel, defendant, and the prosecutor shall remain seated at the counsel table at all times except: when the Judge enters or leaves the courtroom; when addressing the Judge or jury; when it is necessary to handle documents or exhibits or when granted permission from the Court to approach the bench, approach a witness, or approach an exhibit; and when objecting to opposing counsel.
24. Counsel and the defendant shall not approach the Judge's bench except with permission from the Court ("May I approach, Your Honor?").
25. Counsel and the defendant shall not lean on the bench, sit on rails or tables, or appear to engage the Court in a confidential manner, unless requested by the Court.
26. Neither counsel nor the defendant shall argue with the Judge, opposing counsel, or the witness.
27. There shall be no reading of newspapers, magazines, books, etc. in the courtroom during proceedings; there shall be no operation of any electronic devices in the courtroom, including but not limited to PDAs, cellular telephones, pagers, i-pads, laptop computers, electronic tablets, or texting devices. Texting or talking on a cell phone in the courtroom is disruptive, disrespectful, and may result in the offender's arrest for contempt and seizure of the device.
28. Do not talk at the same time as the Court, counsels, witnesses, or other court personnel.
29. Racist, sexist, obscene, or profane language or gestures are prohibited unless it is pertinent to a case and is elicited and quoted from facts in the case.
30. Do not enter and depart the courtroom excessively.
31. Do nothing to disturb or distract the court, counsels, witnesses, and other court personnel. Children must not create a disturbance or they will be asked to be removed from the courtroom.
32. Young children such as infants and toddlers should not be brought into the courtroom.
33. Do not approach the Judge's bench or Clerk's desk without permission. Do not rest arms or hands on the bench.
34. Do not lean over or touch any part of the Judge's bench or go past any railings, markers, or dividers placed in front of the bench to restrict access to the bench.
35. Leave all purses, bags, brief cases, etc. at the defense table when you are called to the Judge's bench.
36. Have all paperwork, driver's license, proof of auto liability insurance, evidence, etc. ready when called to approach the Judge's bench.

37. No food or drinks are allowed to be brought into the courtroom.
38. No party may leave the courthouse if their case has been re-set for another hearing or trial without first obtaining and signing a court date re-set form.
39. The Court may enforce these rules of conduct and decorum by appropriate action or sanctions.
40. Nothing herein shall prevent or prohibit the further adoption of new rules or revision of these rules.

## **VI. PRE-TRIAL HEARINGS**

All cases set for Trial by Judge or Trial by Jury shall be set for a mandatory Pre-Trial hearing. It is hereby ordered that in all cases not disposed of before pre-trial the prosecutor and defendant shall appear, present, and argue any motions regarding the following pre-trial matters, pursuant to Article 28.01, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure:

1. Arraignment of the defendant;
2. Pleadings of the defendant;
3. Special pleas, if any;
4. Exceptions to the complaint;
5. Motions for continuance;
6. Motions to suppress evidence;
7. Motions for change of venue;
8. Motions or Requests for Discovery;
9. Entrapment;
10. Motions for appointment of an interpreter;
11. Requests for jury trial and/or request for jury to assess fine rather than judge;
12. In all cases where a jury trial is requested, the defendant and prosecutor will prepare proposed Jury Charges and submit them to the Court at the Pre-Trial hearing.

A failure to present and argue any of the above motions or matters at pre-trial shall constitute a waiver of the party's right to present said requests or defense motion or said matters (1-13 above) to the court.

A defendant may request a waiver of the mandatory Pre-Trial Hearing by filing a written "WAIVER OF PRE-TRIAL HEARING" with the Court Clerk at the time of their arraignment or no less than ten (10) days prior to their pre-trial hearing. The judge will rule on this.

## **VII. FORMAT OF MOTIONS, FILING OF MOTIONS, AND SERVING COPIES OF ALL MOTIONS ON OPPOSING PARTIES**

All motions shall be hand-printed or typed in a format of no less than 12 point Times New Roman font and shall include orders, including the case caption (names and cause number), for the judge to sign granting or denying each motion. If there are multiple cases/charges, the motion and accompanying order must reflect all charges and case numbers in the caption.

The party filing the motion must file the original motion with the Court Clerk and must include an order for the judge to sign with his ruling.

Original motions shall be filed with the Court Clerk via hand-filing, certified mail delivery, or via fax delivery. If utilizing fax delivery, it is incumbent on the party filing the motion to ensure that the Court Clerk has received the movant's motion and order. E-Mail is not a proper method of service of delivery to the Court or any other party.

The party filing said motions shall serve the opposing party with a true and correct copy of their motions, no later than 24 hours from the time/date of the filing of their motion with the Court. Service of said motions on opposing counsel shall be by hand-delivery, fax delivery, or certified mail delivery. E-mail is not a proper method of service.

#### **VIII. MOTIONS FOR CONTINUANCE**

All motions and requests for continuance must be sworn to, under oath, in writing, and must be filed with the Court (submitted to and received) no less than 72 hours before the date of a hearing sought to be continued. All motions to continue a jury trial shall be served on the Court and all opposing parties no later than TEN (10) DAYS BEFORE THE TRIAL DATE.

There will be no re-sets of any trials except upon an emergency situation or inability of a party to produce a material witness or material evidence for trial (with no fault of their own) or other exigent circumstances that compel a continuance of the trial setting.

When submitting a motion for continuance, as in all motions, the party or his/her attorney are required to attach an order for the Judge to sign indicating whether the motion has been granted or denied.

If, and only if, the motion is granted by the court are attorneys and parties excused from appearing. It is the duty of the movant to ascertain whether the Judge has granted or denied their motion for continuance. If the motion has not been granted, the attorneys and parties are required to attend the court session to which they were assigned. If the motion for continuance was granted by the Judge, the attorneys, pro-se litigants, and all parties agree to appear at the new court date.

It is the duty of all attorneys and pro-se litigants to contact the court and ascertain the time and date to which the case is reset. Failure to appear at the time and date on which your case is re-set shall constitute a Failure To Appear/Bail Jumping criminal charge to be issued against the defendant and may also be grounds for a contempt of court (order) charge being filed against the attorney as well as a possible complaint being issued to the State Bar of Texas for disciplinary proceedings.

#### **IX. DISCOVERY REQUESTS BY DEFENDANT - MICHAEL MORTON ACT**

All requests for discovery by the Defendant to the Prosecutor must be in writing and an extra copy must be filed with the Court so the Discovery Request can be placed in the court's file.

The Prosecutor is ordered to provide discovery to all defendants pursuant to Article 39.14(d), Texas Code of Criminal Procedure.

The State Prosecutor is ordered to produce to the defendant, without the necessity of the defendant obtaining a court order, any and all evidence material to any matter involved in the case that is in the possession, custody, or control of the state or any person under a state contract.

The Prosecutor is also ordered to provide a written inventory list of all discovery items produced to the defendant to the Court, so the Court can note this production of evidence in the court's file.

All pro se defendants can request discovery through a formal written discovery motion to the Court or, alternatively, can make a written evidence request to the Prosecutor, who shall forward a copy of defendant's request for discovery to the court, so that it can be reduced to an order.

If a Defendant elects to take Driver Safety Class, Deferred Disposition Probation, or to plead guilty or no contest to the charge, the Defendant waives their right to trial by jury and right to discovery.

#### **X. NO PARTY OR ATTORNEY MAY RECORD TRIAL PROCEEDINGS**

No audio or visual electronic recordings shall be made of any court proceedings, hearings, or trials. The recording of any court proceedings is prohibited unless the Presiding Judge approves of this, after a written request. Any person caught recording proceedings without previous approval from the Presiding Judge may be held in contempt of court and may have their recording device seized.

#### **XI. NO USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING COURT PROCEEDINGS**

The use of any cell phone, PDA, camera, video recorder, smart phone, laptop, thinkpad, i-pad, electronic tablet, or any other electronic devices is prohibited in the courtroom.

#### **XII. ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS OF DEFENDANTS & ATTORNEYS**

Attorneys appearing before this court, parents and/or guardians of juvenile defendants (under 17 years old), and adult defendants (pro-se or represented by counsel) are ordered to deliver, in writing, notice of a correct current mailing address, working telephone number, and email address at the time of their first court appearance.

All attorneys, parents of juvenile defendants, and all adult defendants are also ordered to advise the Court of any changes to their mailing address, telephone number, and email address within three (3) days of said change.

Defendants, parents, and attorneys acknowledge and understand that failure to update the court with a new address, telephone number, and email address may result in a failure to receive notice of a court setting that may result in a judgment being rendered or a warrant being issued for defendant's arrest.

A defendant's failure (or a parent or attorney's failure) to update an address and/or telephone number will not raise the defense of lack of notice of a hearing, trial, or show cause setting. Failure

to advise the court of a change of address may also result in the filing and prosecution of contempt charges against the defendant or parents of a juvenile defendant.

### **XIII. JUVENILE DEFENDANTS HAVE A CONTINUING OBLIGATION TO APPEAR**

A child is any person who is under 17 years of age. A child and parent are required to appear before the court and have an obligation to provide the court written notice of the current address and residence of the child. The obligation does not end when the child reaches age 17 (legal adult in criminal matters). A violation of failure to notify the court of any change of your address may result in the defendant's arrest and is a Class C misdemeanor. The obligation to provide notice terminates only on discharge and satisfaction of the judgment or final disposition of your case.

### **XIV. BAILIFFS**

A Bailiff (Liberty Hill Police Officer) shall be present at all times when the Court is in session or in recess, unless excused by the Judge. No duty shall be assigned to the Bailiff without prior approval of the Judge. The Bailiffs are given full authority to enforce and are ordered to enforce all rules of conduct and decorum and other duties assigned by the Judge.

### **XV. ENDORSEMENT**

All attorneys practicing before this Court and all pro se defendants acting as their own counsel are required to read these rules completely and to conform their conduct to the above stated Local Rules of Court and Rules of Decorum. All attorneys practicing before this Court and all pro-se defendants acting as their own counsel are required to sign and attest to their receipt of these Rules and to acknowledge that they will follow said Rules at the time of their first court appearance.

Failure to sign and submit all information requested in the ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING AND RECEIPT OF LOCAL RULES OF COURT AND RULES OF DECORUM as requested will be considered a violation of these local rules and may result in the filing of a contempt of court charge and report to State Bar of Texas disciplinary authorities.

The Court Clerk shall deliver via fax, mail, or e-mail, a copy of this order and the Local Rules of Court and Court Decorum to all attorneys with cases before the Court and shall request the attorney to sign and return the ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING AND RECEIPT OF RULES OF DECORUM AND CONDUCT WITHIN TEN DAYS OF RECEIPT OF THE RULES.

**SIGNED AND ORDERED on May 12, 2016.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin R. Madison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Honorable Kevin R. Madison, Presiding Judge  
Liberty Hill Municipal Court**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING AND RECEIPT  
OF LOCAL RULES OF COURT AND COURT DECORUM OF  
LIBERTY HILL MUNICIPAL COURT**

I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE RECEIVED AND READ A COPY OF THE LOCAL RULES OF COURT AND COURT DECORUM FOR LIBERTY HILL MUNICIPAL COURT ISSUED BY JUDGE MADISON ON MAY 12, 2016, AND I AGREE TO COMPLY WITH ALL OF SAID RULES AND ANY AMMENDMENTS TO SAID RULES. SAID RULES ARE POSTED IN THE COURT LOBBY AND AT THE COURT'S WEBSITE.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City                      State                      Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone numbers

\_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Are you an attorney licensed in Texas:

\_\_\_\_\_ No

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes. If "yes" list State Bar ID number:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Attorney's State Bar Card Number