

MASTER-IN-EQUITY

Procedures Moving Forward

In efforts to promote judicial efficiency and ensure compliance with all social distancing criteria moving forward, the Master-In-Equity (MIE) finds it imperative to clarify new Court procedures. Please review these procedures carefully and if you have any questions, concerns, or comments please contact our office at (843) 958 – 5070 or joneale@charlestoncounty.org.

Hearings

The MIE will conduct hearings virtually. WebEx is the sole platform used for all virtual hearings and the Court will be in charge of scheduling and hosting the WebEx. If you are planning to appear virtually, please read through the following directions:

1. When you receive a scheduled hearing date, you will be given a WebEx Link to the “meeting room.”
2. The meeting room start time will be ten (10) minutes prior to the hearing. You will need to access the meeting room at this time to allow ten (10) minutes of flushing out any connectivity issues. (*see* Accessing WebEx attachment below)
3. Please ensure during the meeting you abide by the following guidelines:
 - a. All participants need to mute the microphone upon entrance to ensure that background noise does not cause distractions and/or interfere with the Court Reporter’s transcription.
 - b. If you do not mute, the Host will manually mute the microphones. Be sure you are familiar with where the mute icon is located. When your turn to speak, simply raise your hand and unmute the screen.
 - c. The Court will have on the bench a card which reads “MIC” and “MUTE”. When you see the “MIC” card and are speaking, you are set on mute as we are unable to hear you. When you see the “MUTE” card, be sure that your computer is set to mute.
4. If you have any trouble accessing WebEx or concerns prior to the hearing, contact Katie Brunson at K.brunson@charlestoncounty.org or by phone at (843) 958 – 5075.

Self-Represented Litigants

Please alert the Court if any parties are Pro Se because the matter will need to be rescheduled another time unless we can ensure the parties are able to appear via WebEx and do not have connectivity issues. In person hearings will be a last resort.

Trials

The MIE seeks to ensure normal court operations continue during these times but the following social distancing criteria must be met prior to holding an in-person trial at the courthouse. Please read through these procedures in reference to in person trials:

A. Entrance to the Courthouse

- Face Coverings – You will not be required to wear a face covering entering the courthouse or the MIE Courtroom; however, if you prefer to wear or bring a mask, you will be able to wear it throughout the trial.
- Questions - Courthouse personnel may inquire about your visit. Be prepared to show your arranged trial date and time on the docket and where you are headed.

B. Notice to all Parties

- To ensure that Notice is sufficient for trial the following criteria needs to be added. These criteria will assist the Court with preparation and aim to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
 - i. Notice of the Hearing needs to be provided to all parties twenty (20) days prior to the trial date;
 - ii. The Defendant needs to contact the Plaintiff within seven (7) days of receipt of Notice to advise of any difficulties with going forward with trial at this time; AND
 - iii. Ten (10) days prior to trial the Court needs to be notified about each of the following:
 1. Any concerns with appearing; and
 2. The number of parties and witnesses; (*see* below) and
 3. Failure to notify the Court results in the trial not moving forward.

C. Trial Limitations

- Capacity - At any given time, there must be no more than ten (10) individuals in the courtroom. This includes the Court staff which totals four (4) individuals. So, the number appearing for parties and witnesses cannot be greater than six (6).
 - If the number is higher than six (6) individuals, the witness will not be able to enter the courthouse and will be required to wait outside until called to testify.
- Cleaning – The courtroom will be cleaned between each trial and the witness stand will be sterilized between each witness.
- Time – Each in person trial must be scheduled at least thirty (30) minutes apart.

D. WebEx Option

- The Court will hold trials by WebEx only with the consent of all parties.

Accessing WebEx

The preferred and sole platform for virtual proceedings at this time is WebEx. The Court will be in charge of scheduling and hosting all proceedings via WebEx pursuant to the Supreme Court of South Carolina's Order RE: Operation of the Trial Courts During the Coronavirus Emergency (As Amended April 22, 2020) App. Case No. 2020-000447. Below is a guideline for accessing WebEx for hearings before the Master-In-Equity:

- Once the proceeding has been scheduled, all parties should receive a link similar to the one below:

Master-In-Equity
Hosted by Katelyn "Katie" Brunson

Wednesday, Apr 29, 2020 11:00 am | 1 hour | (UTC-04:00) Eastern
Time (US & Canada)

Meeting number: 713 843 874

Password: Webinar

<https://charlestoncounty.webex.com/charlestoncounty/j.php?MTID=md23847d962033d78ecae93cc381a6ad0>

Join by video system

Dial 713843874@charlestoncounty.webex.com

You can also dial 173.243.2.68 and enter your meeting number.

Join by phone

+1-408-418-9388 United States Toll

Access code: 713 843 874

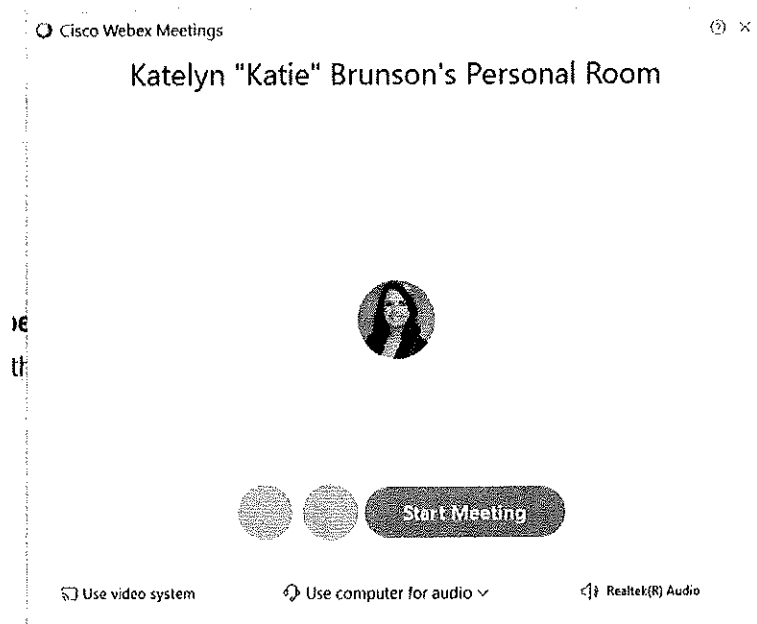
- A WebEx account is not needed to access the meeting room. The meeting room is accessed by clicking the link highlighted in yellow in the email received from the Court.
- Clicking the link will prompt a new screen to open starting Cisco WebEx. If this is the first time accessing WebEx, the screen will be similar to the image below:



Katelyn "Katie" Brunson's Personal Room

Click Open Cisco Webex Meetings if you see a message from your browser.
If the desktop app doesn't launch, you may need to download it.

- If the application has not been previously downloaded, select download and follow the prompts for installation. . The download process can take a few minutes, so be sure to do this in advance of your hearing time in order that it will not delay your entry into the meeting room. Once the install process has been completed the meeting room will appear. Here is an example:



- Ensure that the audio and video are on (allowing access) then click the GREEN button to enter the meeting.
- If you are experiencing any difficulties with WebEx outside of a scheduled hearing time, please [CLICK HERE](#) to be transferred to the FAQs page on WebEx. If you are experiencing difficulties accessing for a proceeding in front of the Master-In-Equity reach out to Katie Brunson at kbrunson@charlestoncounty.org or by phone at (843) 958 – 5075.