

## **COVID-19 Operating Plan for the Zavalla Municipal Court, City Judiciary**

Recognizing the need to ensure the health and safety of litigants, attorneys, visitors, court staff, judges, and other individuals entering the buildings housing the courts, the courts of **the City of Zavalla** will implement the following protective measures:

### **General**

1. All judges will comply with the Emergency Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Texas and Court of Criminal Appeals, including conducting in-person proceedings according to the guidance issued by the Office of Court Administration regarding social distancing, maximum group size, and other restrictions and precautions.
2. All judges will use all reasonable efforts to conduct proceedings remotely.
3. The presiding judge of the municipal court will maintain regular communication with the local health authority, county judge and mayor, and adjust this operating plan as necessary with conditions in the county.
4. Judges will begin setting non-essential in-person proceedings no sooner than August 17, 2020

### **Judge and Court Staff Health**

1. Judges and court staff who can perform the essential functions of their job remotely will telework when possible.
2. Judge and Court Staff Monitoring Requirements: Judges, Court Staff, and city employees are the only persons who may enter the office area of the Zavalla City Hall. The public lobby/waiting area is utilized for in-person contact not only by the Municipal Court, but also by all other city departments. The number of persons from the public that will be allowed in the lobby/waiting area must be no greater than 7 at any time. This means that only a total of 7 persons may be present, which includes persons transacting business not only with the Municipal Court, but also any persons transacting business with any other city department.
3. Judges or court staff who feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 99.6°F, or with new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, or having known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19 will not be permitted to enter the building and should seek medical advice.
4. Judges and court staff will be required to wear face coverings, practice social distancing, and practice appropriate hygiene recommendations at all time. No bathroom will be available to the public, unless medically necessary. There is no public water fountain in city hall. Clerks or personnel who deal with the public will have acrylic/glass guards. City personnel involved in any in-person contact must maintain social distancing of at least six feet apart and will be provided face masks and gloves. The public is encouraged to use the drive-thru window that is available during regular office hours to minimize personal contact.

5. **Protective Measures:** Persons, other than city employees, must enter only by the front door of city hall. All persons entering the lobby/waiting area of city hall must wear masks or face coverings. If persons do not have a mask/face covering, one will be provided, subject to availability. There are ground markers that are six feet apart inside the lobby. Only those handling actual business are allowed in city hall (no extra people allowed, except in the case of juveniles or those with disabilities). All social distancing requirements will be clearly marked. The public will be advised not to enter the building, and will be questioned, regarding whether they feel feverish or have measured temperatures equal to or greater than 99.6°F, or have new or worsening signs or symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, or having known close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19, and such persons will not be permitted to enter the building and should seek medical advice. Hand sanitizer dispensers will be made available inside/outside the lobby area, and in the break room or other work areas for employees. In the council chambers or courtroom, seating will be limited to 50% capacity, and will be marked to designate proper social distancing. Only seating in every other row will be allowed and clearly marked. The Court will attempt to conduct any court proceedings FaceTime, Zoom, or by telephone/conference calls when legally possible.

#### **Scheduling**

1. The following court schedules are established to reduce occupancy in the court building:  
No more than one meeting, court proceeding, or hearing will be scheduled each day, to allow adequate time to clean and disinfect the area that was utilized. This includes city council meetings, court dockets, hearings, trials, or other proceedings where more than 7 persons are expected and allowed to be present.

#### **Vulnerable Populations**

1. Individuals who are over age 65 and individuals with serious underlying health conditions, such as high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune systems are compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer or other conditions requiring such therapy are considered to be vulnerable populations.
2. Each judge will include information on orders setting hearings, dockets notices, and in other communications notifying individuals who are in vulnerable populations of the ability to contact the court to identify themselves as a vulnerable individual and receive accommodations. A notice with this information will be posted on the courts' websites and in conspicuous locations around the court building (a copy of which is attached).
3. Vulnerable populations who are scheduled for court will be accommodated by scheduling separate times for attending to court or any other city business and transactions. During this separate time, no other persons will be allowed to enter city hall, other than medically necessary for handicapped individuals. Information describing the separate times for the vulnerable population will be clearly stated in signs located at the entrance and lobby area of

city hall. Protective equipment such as face coverings will be provided if individuals do not have their own. City staff will closely monitor and maintain clean and disinfected areas for any areas used by the public. Vulnerable population will be questioned about medical reasons to determine if they should be excluded from entry, just as in every other situation, as stated above.

### Social Distancing

1. All persons not from the same household who are permitted in the court building will be required to maintain adequate social distancing of at least 6 feet.
2. There will be no access to a public restroom. For employees of the City of Zavalla, each restroom has been evaluated to determine the appropriate capacity to ensure social distancing and the maximum capacity has been posted on each restroom door.
3. Public common areas, including breakrooms and snack rooms, have been closed to the public.
4. The maximum number of persons permitted in the gallery of each courtroom has been determined and posted. The maximum capacity of the courtroom will be monitored and enforced by court staff.
5. The gallery of the courtroom has been marked to identify appropriate social distancing in the seating. Seating is limited to every other row.
6. In each courtroom, the counsel tables, witness stand, judge's bench, and clerk, court reporter, and bailiff seating have been arranged in such a way so that there is social distancing of at least 6 feet between each space.

### Hygiene

1. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed at the entrances to the building, outside of each meeting area or courtroom, and outside of bathrooms.
2. Tissues have been placed near the door of the courtroom, at counsel tables, at the witness stand, on the judges' benches, and in the hallways.
3. The Department of State Health Service's "Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer" has been posted in multiple locations on each floor of the court building.

### Screening

1. Designated city employees will ask the individuals if they are feeling feverish; have a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing; or have been in close contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Individuals who indicate yes to any of these questions will be refused admittance to the court building.
2. When individuals attempt to enter the court building, designated city personnel will use an infrared thermometer to determine the temperature of the individual. Individuals whose temperature equals or exceeds 100.0°F will be refused admittance to the court building. about feeling feverish or having a temperature which is equal to or exceeds 100.0°F, and if these conditions are present, they will be refused admittance to the court building.
3. Staff who are screening individuals entering the court building will be provided personal protective equipment, including surgical facemasks.

**Face Coverings**

1. All individuals entering the court building will be required to wear face coverings at all times.
2. Individuals will be encouraged to bring cloth face coverings with them, but if the individual does not have a cloth face covering, a disposable face mask will be provided, subject to availability.
3. Individuals who will be required to be in the court building for over 1 hour will be provided surgical masks and required to wear them while in the court building, if the supply is available.

**Cleaning**

1. The lobby and courtroom/council chambers will be cleared prior to and immediately after any meetings or hearings, and the lobby area and areas for employees will be cleaned periodically throughout the day. Hand sanitizer dispensers will be made available inside/outside the lobby area, and in the break room or other work areas for employees.
2. Court building cleaning staff have been provided cleaning supplies shown to be effective with this coronavirus.
3. Court building cleaning staff have been trained on proper cleaning techniques and provided appropriate personal protective equipment.


**Other**

I have attempted to confer with all departments in the Zavalla City Hall, where the court is located, regarding this Operating Plan. In developing the plan, I consulted with the local health authority, the Mayor for the City of Zavalla, and the Angelina county Judge, documentation of which is attached to this plan. I will ensure that any judges and all departments with offices in the court building covered by this Operating Plan will conduct proceedings consistent with the plan.

Date: August 18, 2020



Julie Alston  
Presiding Judge of Municipal Court  
City of Zavalla

  
Carlos Guzman  
Mayor, City of Zavalla

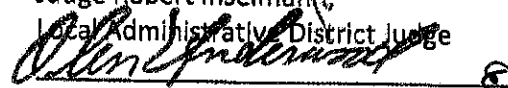
**APPROVED:**



Judge Robert Inselmann,  
Local Administrative District Judge

Date:

September 4, 2020



Judge Olen Underwood,  
Regional Administrative District Judge

Date:

9/8/2020