



90TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
EMMET COUNTY

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Contact: Amanda Miller, District Court Administrator

Phone: 231-348-1750

Email: amiller@emmetcounty.org

90th DISTRICT COURT RESUMES JURY TRIALS

The 90th District Court for Charlevoix and Emmet counties recently became the first district court in our region to hold a jury trial since the COVID-19 pandemic according to Judge Angela Lasher.

The statewide shutdown in March greatly impacted the courts. While the 90th District Court continued to operate and address all necessary hearings, the Michigan Supreme Court halted all jury trials through the end of June. “Because we adapted so quickly to remote technology, the District Court has not had a backlog of cases and we have met the safety needs of our employees and the public” said Judge Lasher. Once jury trials were able to resume, the District Court quickly began devising a plan that followed the safety protocols already put into place and recognized the unique circumstances of a jury trial.

“The first issue that we faced was how do you socially distance a jury pool which can include as many as 50 people” said Judge Lasher. The District Court summoned a greater number of jurors than normal and carefully considered requests to be excused for medical issues. The court then used two courtrooms to accommodate the entire jury pool and streamed the proceedings. “The court staff worked tirelessly on the logistics of having jurors in two locations in the county building and the assistance of the county administration, IT department, and the Sheriff’s Department was crucial to our success” said Judge Lasher.

Once the jury was selected, the jurors were at least 6 feet from one another and wore masks at all times. Each was provided with their own material and sanitizing wipes were available at all times. The jury deliberated in the courtroom so that they could maintain social distancing.

“I spoke with the jurors afterwards and each said that they felt safe and that jury service had been a positive experience” said Judge Lasher.

The 90th District Court has several more jury trials scheduled for the rest of the year in both Charlevoix and Emmet Counties.

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