

Perry County Courthouse to remain open during state of emergency

The Perry County Courthouse will remain open during the state of emergency caused by the Coronavirus outbreak with limited staff and public access. The Perry County Commissioners recently limited access to the courthouse to the handicap entrance on the West Brown Street side of the building. All other entrances, including the Main Street entrance, will remain closed.

NEW LEXINGTON - Perry County Courthouse staff and personnel have implemented precautionary measures intended to combat the spread of the Coronavirus. According to the Honorable Judge Dean Wilson, the Ohio Supreme Court issued guidelines for lower courts across the state to follow during the pandemic crisis.

The court issued the order last Monday (March 30) in response to Governor Mike DeWine's recent state of emergency declaration. Perry County Commissioners ordered access to the courthouse building be restricted to lower level entrance at the West Brown Street side of the building.

A hand washing station and a sheriff's deputy are stationed at the lone remaining entrance. The deputy is tasked among other chores with ensuring that each person washes their hands upon entering the facility and that they also provide their contact information. An additional plan to check temperatures of persons who enter the building have yet to be implemented due to a lack of available equipment.

According to Judge Wilson, the Perry County Municipal Court offices are closed to the general public and currently accept court payments online or by mail, and that the staff will not accept payments in the office until the state of emergency is lifted.

Online payments can be made through the court's website at www.perrycountycourt.com.

Courtroom activities will also be altered temporarily with all appearances for criminal and traffic offenses to be limited to defendants and victims

Judge Wilson has also implemented a scheduling plan that ensures the Perry County Municipal Court remains fully staffed while also maintaining the six-foot social distancing rule, with staff members currently working half shifts that rotate between the morning and afternoon hours.

These efforts have been enacted to help minimize the number of people who need to appear at the courthouse building. The court is currently limited to arraignments, which are conducted by video whenever possible and preliminary hearings with a precedence given to cases involving acts of violence including domestic assaults and assaults.

The Supreme Court order also affects the time requirements of the court, Any scheduling orders issued on or after March 9 remains in effect, orders issued after March 9 will be reconsidered by the local courts. The order was made retroactive to March 9 to coincide with Governor DeWine's state of emergency declaration.

Despite the access limitations and staff scheduling changes, the Perry County Courthouse will remain open during regular business hours Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m.