



MUNICIPAL COURTS WEEK CELEBRATION – November 7 thru 11, 2016

Municipal Courts throughout Texas are being recognized for the dedicated Judges, Court Clerks, Court Administrators, Prosecutors and Bailiffs who comprise the Texas Municipal Courts. We are taking the time to not only recognize how much Municipal Courts do, but to share with you the important role that local courts and their personnel play in the criminal justice system and the community.

More Texans come into personal contact with Municipal Courts than all other Texas courts combined. Regardless of a city's size, the Municipal Court is where the average citizen is most likely to interact with the court as a defendant, witness or juror. For the last five years, the Harlingen Municipal Court has maintained separate dockets for Youth Court, City Ordinances and Adult Court. This separation provides a forum for juveniles and minors scheduled during Youth Court to speak directly and privately with city prosecutors to resolve their case. The City Ordinance docket allows ordinance violators a chance to comply with local ordinances as an alternative to a fine and conviction. And finally, Adult Court separates adult violators from juveniles and minors who may be more impressionable and more intimidated by a courtroom full of adults.

These alternatives show that the City and the Court are concerned with the health and safety of its citizens and it also helps to create a strong connection with the Harlingen Community.

The court also schedules weekly Pre-trial conferences for defendants who enter a "Not Guilty" plea. During the pre-trial conference, a defendant has an opportunity to speak with the prosecutor prior to trial to try and work out an acceptable solution to his or her case. If a plea agreement is reached, the agreement is forwarded to the judge for approval. If an agreement is not reached between the defendant and the prosecutor, the case will be scheduled for a Bench or Jury trial.

In addition to the weekly dockets, the court holds Magistrate dockets twice daily during the week and once on Saturday and Sunday. The Magistrate docket is a session in which the judge, clerk, bailiff and booking officers work together to ensure that arrestees are brought before a magistrate for his or her magistrate warnings or for arraignment.

The court staff also appears at local elementary during Parents Night to distribute Traffic Safety materials to children and Alcohol and Drug Awareness material to their parents. These materials are also distributed by court staff during National Night Out.

The court staff works tirelessly with the judges, prosecutors and the bailiff to ensure that all cases are ready for each of the Adult dockets, Magistrate dockets, Bench and Jury trial dockets, Pre-trial dockets, Youth Court dockets and Ordinance dockets. This celebration today is a chance for you to get to know the people of the court and to give your support and appreciation for what we do for the city and the community. We hope you enjoy your time here today.