

JUDGE ERIC C. ROBERSON
Division A Procedures

Sarah Kaleel, Judicial Assistant
Nassau County Historic Courthouse
416 Centre Street
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034
Email: skaleel@coj.net
Telephone: (904) 491-7275

INTRODUCTION

Rule 1.010 of the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure and the Rules of Judicial Administration encourage the speedy, just and inexpensive determination of every action, and impose on the trial court the duty to monitor and manage the docket in order to achieve this goal. These policies and procedures are intended to most efficiently and effectively apply the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, which shall control if there is any conflict between the two.

EX-PARTE HOURS

Short, uncontested matters – including setting matters for trial – will be heard during designated Ex-Parte dates. These hearings are not scheduled with the Court and are heard on a first-come, first-serve basis. Ex parte is conducted via zoom, the number to call in is 646-588-8656, the meeting id number is 876 863 2186, the zoom link is <https://zoom.us/j/8768632186>. A copy of the notice of hearing and any other relevant documents/proposed orders should be emailed to the Court's Judicial Assistant upon filing, or at least three (3) business days prior to the scheduled date. Prior to the hearing for the entry of an uncontested Final Judgment of Dissolution of Marriage, the movant should complete a checklist for consent final judgment. A copy of the form can be found on the above-referenced website. Please note that uncontested divorces may be scheduled for a time certain if the parties so desire in order to afford some privacy.

SETTING MATTERS FOR TRIAL (JURY AND NON-JURY)

When the case is at issue, any party may file a Motion to Set Matter for Trial. The parties may obtain a trial date without the requirement to appear during Ex-Parte hours by jointly completing the Trial Set Memorandum and providing it by e-mail

to skaleel@coj.net along with (i) the proposed mediator and (ii) the proposed trial week(s).

Alternatively, the parties can also coordinate the best Ex-Parte date and file a Notice of Hearing. Neither the Motion to Set nor the Notice of Hearing need to be provided to the Court. At the Ex-Parte hearing, the parties shall provide a completed Trial Set Memorandum (available on the Court's web page) along with (i) the proposed mediator and (ii) the proposed trial week(s). The movant shall also provide the Court with pre-stamped, addressed envelopes for any party not receiving electronic filings.

In either event, the Court will then prepare and e-file the Trial Order.

If the case settles, the parties shall immediately notify the Court so that it may be removed from the trial calendar.

SCHEDULING HEARINGS

ALL hearings must be coordinated with opposing counsel. The party requesting a hearing on any pending motion should contact the Judicial Assistant with all other parties on the line or by emailing skaleel@coj.net and copying all parties. Please do not include or copy the Judicial Assistant on those coordinating emails. Dates provided for hearings are not held and may be given to other cases. It is expected that all counsel will promptly respond to the moving party's attorney with proposed dates received from the Judicial Assistant to facilitate this process. This office will confirm once a hearing date is secured.

Once a hearing time is set, no party may add or notice additional matters for that time without the express consent of all parties.

If the parties cancel a hearing, the parties shall immediately file a Notice of Cancellation and e-mail the Notice to the Judicial Assistant. It is imperative the Court have the opportunity to repost the hearing time for use in other cases.

Pursuant to the local administrative order entered on June 15, 2021, effective June 21, the Nassau County Phase 2 Operational Plan has been rescinded. While the Court strongly encourages remote appearances, in-person court appearances are now permissible and facemasks are optional. However, the parties may still appear via zoom, the number to call in is 646-588-8656, the meeting id number is 876 863 2186,

the zoom link is <https://zoom.us/j/8768632186>. Zoom will be the default for scheduled hearings, unless the parties request from the Court to have the hearing in person.

The Court's hearing schedule has very little, and sometimes no time in-between hearings. Please arrive early and allow plenty of time for parking. Failure to timely appear for a hearing may result in the motion being denied (if moving party) or the motion being heard without you (if the non-moving party). Moreover, the Court will enforce the time limits set for each hearing. Any matters not resolved during the scheduled hearing time will have to be re-scheduled or decided after an opportunity for written briefing.

COURTESY COPIES

If, in the attorney's professional judgment, providing the Court with a courtesy copy of a motion, accompanying memoranda or case law would assist the Court in deciding a motion more expeditiously, the attorney should provide those materials **at least 5 days prior to the hearing**. Although the Court operates with limited resources and a substantial caseload, it endeavors to decide motions as promptly as reasonably practical. The Court appreciates efficiency and brevity in all motions and memoranda.

Motions, pleadings and memoranda may be provided by e-mail as well as U.S. Mail or hand delivery. Any binders containing case law shall be **received** by the Court **at least 5 days prior to the hearing**, with copies provided to all other parties at the same time. Failure to abide by these terms may result in the hearing being canceled by the Court without notice.

The Court encourages all parties to work together where possible to submit one copy of the supporting materials necessary for the Court's consideration.

MOTIONS FOR REHEARING, NEW TRIAL OR EMERGENCY MOTIONS

These motions should first be e-filed with the Clerk of Court. The party filing the motion shall provide a copy for review by U.S. Mail, hand delivery or e-mail **at the time the motion is filed**. . Motions for Rehearing are generally ruled upon on the face of the Motion and any response. If a hearing is required, the Court will

schedule a hearing with the parties. Requests for “Emergency” hearings will be reviewed by the Court and scheduled accordingly.

CERTAIN MOTIONS TO BE DECIDED WITHOUT HEARING

There are several motions that restrict the Court to the four corners of the pleadings and/or are routinely granted in the Court’s discretion. To achieve a prompt resolution of those motions and to provide available hearing time for other motions, the Court will routinely handle the following motions without a hearing: (i) **Motions to Dismiss**; (ii) **Motions for Judgment on the Pleading**; (iii) **Motions to Strike**; (iv) **Motions for Leave to Amend** (except ones seeking to plead punitive damages); and (v) **Motions for Extension / Enlargement of Time to Respond**.

Upon the filing of one of these motions, the non-moving party may either file a response within 14 days or send a copy of the Motion to the Judicial Assistant via e-mail for ruling. The moving party may reply to a response within 14 days. The moving party shall e-mail the Judicial Assistant (and copy all other parties) with the motion, response and reply when the motion is ripe for determination. After reviewing the submissions the Court may, in its discretion, schedule a hearing in appropriate cases.

DISCOVERY DISPUTES

Florida Rule of Civil Procedure 1.380 provides for the recovery of expenses by the prevailing party in a discovery dispute absent certain findings. Thus, it is the Rule to award expenses to the prevailing party, not the exception. With this in mind, the parties should make every effort to resolve discovery disputes without judicial intervention.

Prior to filing a Motion to Compel the moving party shall confer in good faith with the non-moving party in an attempt to resolve the discovery dispute. The Court does not believe this is merely a “box to check” before filing such a motion. Indeed, the Court fully expects that the description of the good faith conferral may be the lengthiest part of the Motion to Compel. If, for any reason, the moving party is unable to confer with counsel for the non-moving party, there should be a detailed description in the motion of all actions taken by the moving party to confer. The good faith requirement imposes the obligation upon all counsel to promptly reply to a ‘meet-and-confer’ request and to provide availability for that meeting.

Once a Motion to Compel or Motion for Sanctions is scheduled on the Court's calendar, **it will only be removed if the case is completely resolved and settled by the parties.**

Florida law does not provide for "General Objections." Any objections to discovery requests must be specific and detailed. Discovery responses listing "General Objections" will be stricken and subject to monetary sanctions.

PROPOSED ORDERS FOLLOWING HEARINGS

Proposed orders after a hearing are to be timely submitted to the Court as follows:

1. If there is an unrepresented party involved in the case not using e-Portal, the proposed Order must be submitted to the Court in writing, with sufficient copies for an original to be entered by the Court and a copy for each party not using e-Portal. Further, the party presenting the proposed Order, shall be responsible for providing **addressed, stamped envelopes for parties not using the e-Portal;**

2. If all parties before the Court are using e-Portal, the proposed Order may be emailed to the Court in Microsoft Word format; and

3. The proposed Order service list must contain e-filing addresses for opposing counsel/unrepresented party. If an unrepresented party does not receive e-filings, counsel must immediately mail or hand deliver to the Court an addressed, stamped envelope.

All proposed Orders presented following a hearing, whether submitted to the Court in writing or via e-mail as contemplated above, **MUST INCLUDE A COVER LETTER INDICATING:**

1. What the Order is for (i.e. the case, the motion heard, including date and time, the title of the Order, etc.); and

2. That all opposing counsel/unrepresented parties have been provided with the same materials being provided to the Court, and whether the parties agree with the language of the proposed Order.

All counsel and unrepresented parties must be copied on the cover letter, including any proposed Order, at the same time provided to the Court. If counsel does not have an email address for an unrepresented party, counsel must mail or hand deliver the proposed Order and letter to the Court consistent with the instructions above.

TRIAL TECHNOLOGY

The Court allows parties to utilize technology in their trial presentations. Counsel is responsible for having any technology set-up and ready to use during the trial without causing unnecessary delay. Please contact the Court's Information Technology department at (904) 548-4909 to coordinate any technological issues in advance of the trial or hearing.