

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****May 19, 2020**

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SUBJECT: SOUTHWEST MUNICIPAL COURT FACILITY – CONSOLIDATING SERVICES TO THE A.D. MARSHALL PUBLIC SAFETY AND COURTS BUILDING

The purpose of this Informal Report is to provide information related to the closure of court operations at the Southwest Municipal Court facility (SWMC) located at 3741 southwest loop 820, and the consolidation of those operations to the A.D. Marshall Public Safety and Courts Building (PSB) 1000 Throckmorton Street effective May 4, 2020.

History

The SWMC opened in July 2011 in an effort to provide a convenient and easily accessible full service facility for citizens in Southwest Fort Worth. In addition to the Municipal Court, space at the facility was used by Code Compliance and the Water Department. The space at SWMC had two courtrooms for bench trials which allowed for expanded dockets for scheduling cases. Most recently court activity at this facility included court functions related to Code and Attorney Plea dockets, Teen Court, cashier services, and in-house collections.

Developments that Led to Changes

As the City's Property Management Department began to access city facilities and working with departments to ensure that facilities were being used as effectively as possible, conversations about potential changes at SWMC began to take place. The first notable change occurred on February 26, 2016 when the Water Department withdrew its satellite payment center at the facility.

As a result of the 2014 Bond Downtown Facility Improvements, recent process improvements, success of court in the community events, declining filings, virtual online service improvements, and increased online payment capability, the Municipal Court began drafting a consolidation plan to move SWMC services back to the PSB and established May 1st as the goal date to have the transition completed. Due to operational changes tied to the COVID-19 pandemic that closed courts to the public in late March 2020, the court leadership team were able to focus their efforts on the consolidation and meeting the timeline goal that had been set.

Municipal Court leadership briefed the Ad Hoc Court Advisory Committee on their plan to consolidate services back to the PSB at their meeting on August 13, 2019, and provided the final update to the committee on May 12, 2020. Additionally, a meeting conducted by WEBEX on April 30, 2020 with Councilmember Jungus Jordan, Assistant City Manager Valerie Washington, Chief Judge Danny Rodgers, and Interim Court Director William F. Rumuly was held to provide an update on the courts transition plan out of SWMC and to discuss the communication strategy being developed to share this information with Fort Worth citizens.

The Municipal Court is collaborating with the City's Communications Office, Mayor and Council, City Manager's Office, other city departments, and neighborhood associations to develop a multi-media approach to share information, and will be engaging in an ongoing media campaign for the next several months to ensure that constituents and stakeholders are aware of this change in court services.

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The 2014 Bond renovations of PSB are currently scheduled to be completed by the end of June 2020. The new ADA ramp, first and second floor ADA bathroom renovations, and first floor courtrooms are completed. The remaining items tied to the second floor courtroom and adjoining jury deliberation room will not impact the court operations moving from SWMC to the PSB.

Future Plans for the Southwest Municipal Court facility and other offsite locations for citizens to access court services

The SWMC facility will not remain empty. The plan for the first and second floor utilization of the SWMC facility, formerly used by the courts, will now be used by Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) to relocate staff from facilities that are being paid for via outside lease agreements. The city will benefit from no longer having to pay for that leased office space. Further, Code Compliance will continue to use the basement level to office two (2) Neighborhood Enforcement districts and the Code Department Training team.

Municipal Court is poised to open a joint service location at the Golden Triangle Library in the summer of 2020. The Court will reassign two existing staff to the location for walk-in payments, proof, and other transactions including virtual walk-in court to see a judge. The court is also exploring the potential to collaborate and co-locate with other city departments in the future to provide access to court services.

If you have any questions, please contact William F. Rumuly, Interim Court Director at 817-392-6736.

David Cooke
City Manager