



City of Dallas

**COVID-19 Operational
Impact on Municipal Court
Public Safety Committee
October 12, 2020**

Preston W. Robinson, Jr.
Administrative Judge

Presentation Overview



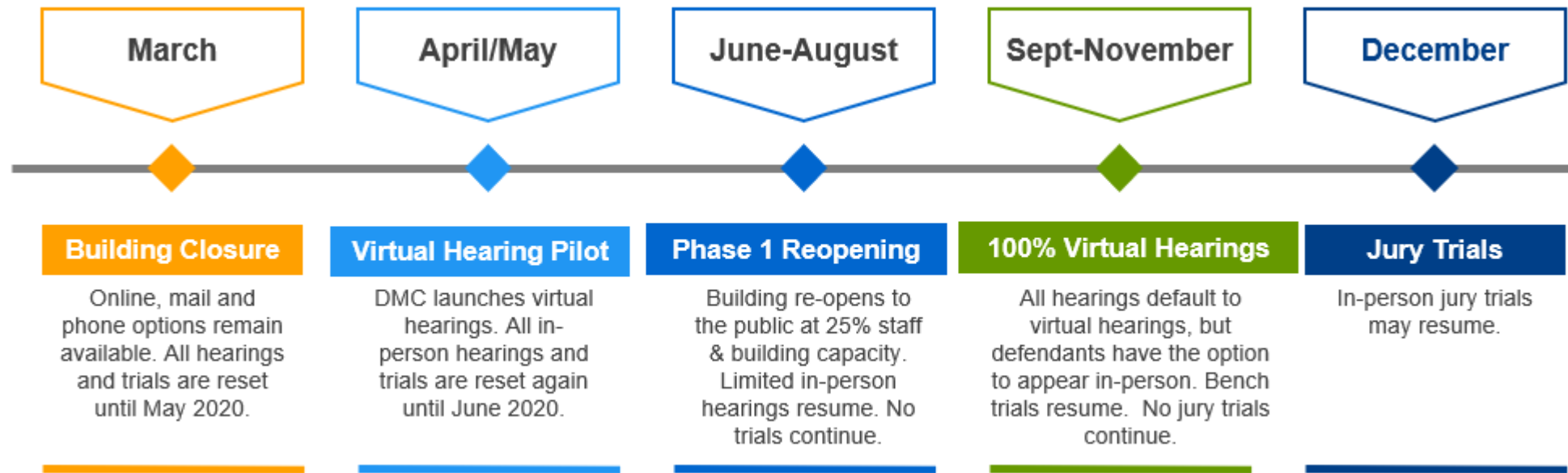
- COVID-19 Impact on Court Operations
- Considerations to Address Backlog



COVID-19 Impact on Court Operations



- Emergency Orders Lead to building closures and multiple case resets
- Court operations resume in accordance with City's Return to Work Plan
- Most recent Emergency Order Extends the prohibition of in-person jury proceedings until December 1, 2020



COVID-19 Impact on Court Operations



Accomplishments

- During buildings closure, continued to provide services such as online case resolution, Live Chat, phone inquiries, mail and email requests
- Beginning June 8th, facility reopened with all COVID-19 precautions in place
- Successfully implemented virtual hearings in all courtrooms
- Continued to dispose of cases between March and September



COVID-19 Impact on Court Operations



- **Challenges**
 - **Technology**
 - Procured additional smartboards for each courtroom
 - Purchased Adobe Sign licenses to implement electronic signatures
 - Experienced constraints with virtual hearing software
 - **Docket Backlog**
 - Defendants are confused due to receiving numerous reset notices
 - Limited number of defendants on dockets per state and local regulations
 - In-person Jury Trials are contingent upon the Emergency Order allowing them to occur no earlier than December 1, 2020
 - Trials are scheduled as far out as calendar year 2022



Considerations to Address Backlog



- **Dismiss cases filed March through September that are awaiting a Trial**
 - Traffic cases only
 - Excludes assaults, COVID-19 ordinance violations, theft and offenses related to street racing
 - These 1,700 cases represent 2% of cases filed during this time frame
 - The number of dismissed cases may increase contingent upon changes in the Emergency Order and/or trial requests
 - Allows the court to back fill court dates
- Increase docket sizes where possible



Considerations to Address Backlog



- Docket Analysis (Supply and Demand)
 - Will require further evaluation by the Court
- Temporarily expand trial days
 - Originally trials were Wednesdays and Thursdays
 - Recently expanded to include Tuesdays
 - May also require adding Mondays
- Additional Service Hours
 - Extend Evening Hours
 - Temporarily add Saturday Court





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