

Hon. Thomas North, P.J.M.C.
February 13, 2023

Certification of Hon. Thomas North

Summary:

I am the Municipal Court Presiding Judge for Vicinage 15 (Cumberland/ Gloucester/ Salem County's). I have served as Presiding Judge for more than 12 years. I also sit as a part-time Municipal Court Judge in the Borough of Westville and Township of Greenwich Municipal Courts in Gloucester County. I have been a Municipal Court Judge for more than 24 years.

I was designated as Vicinage Presiding Judge by Chief Justice Stuart Rabner in August 2010. As Presiding Judge, I mentor other Municipal Court Judges. When a new Municipal Court Judge is appointed in the Vicinage, I meet with that judge, review judicial responsibilities, and discuss court operations including the collaborative relationship between the Judge and Court Administrator. I also participate in semi-annual statewide training for newly appointed Municipal Court judges and mandatory annual training for all Municipal Court judges statewide.

I have worked with Judge Jason Witcher for more than 10 years.

As Presiding Judge, I work as a conduit between the Assignment Judge and the Municipal Courts in Vicinage 15, working closely with the Municipal Court Judges and Court Administrators. I am available 24/7 to answer questions. Municipal Court Judges and Court Administrators contact me with questions, as do the Municipalities on occasion. I am glad when judges call me with questions.

Municipal Division Manager Ashley Wolk distributed the Supreme Court's November 18, 2021 and October 27, 2022 Orders to the Vicinage 15 Municipal Court Judges. After those distributions, I fielded some questions from some Judges and Court Administrators about implementation of the Court's Orders.

On January 6, 2023, I provided a training along with staff from the Administrative Office of the Courts to all Vicinage 15 Municipal Court Judges, Court Administrators, and others, about judicial and administrative responsibilities in implementing the Court's October 27, 2022 Order. I then scheduled individual meetings with the Municipal Court teams (Judge and

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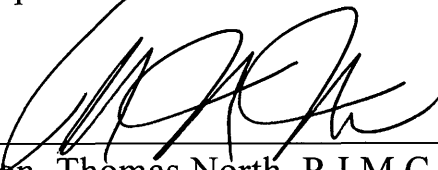
Court Administrator, and sometimes others), with all initial meetings completed by late January 2023.

I met with Judge Witcher and the administrators in the Municipal Courts in Bridgeton-Joint, Carney's Point, Millville, and Penns Grove, on January 13, 2023. That January 13 meeting concluded with some questions still pending, so I scheduled a subsequent meeting to continue on January 20. Judge Witcher did not appear on January 20, so I rescheduled the meeting for February 3. On February 3, 2023, I met with the Municipal Court Administrators, but Judge Witcher did not join the meeting. At the February 3, 2023 meeting, I reviewed basic scheduling protocols. An email formalizing those protocols was distributed, including to Judge Witcher, as interim guidance pending any adjustments by Judge Witcher.

Municipal Court Judges have always been responsible for oversight of case management and scheduling. Before the Municipal Courts adopted virtual technologies, judges did not have to think about or provide direction as to the format of a court date because everything was in person. But we were still involved in case management, particularly cases involving consequences of magnitude, telling staff when to schedule a next court date based the status of case management in the case. Today, I and other Municipal Court Judges continue to provide direction as to when a case should be rescheduled, depending on the status of discovery, availability of counsel, the age of the case, and the need for adjudication. When we provide direction, we also direct whether the case should be scheduled in person or virtually. It is our job to tell the litigants what is going to happen and when.

I am providing this certification voluntarily and of my own free will. I have not been coerced by anyone to make the certification. I certify that the foregoing statements made by me are true. I understand that if the foregoing statements are willfully false, I am subject to punishment.

Dated: February 13, 2023



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