



SPALDING COUNTY STATE COURT

Honorable Josh W. Thacker

Physical Address:

Spalding County Courthouse
132 E. Solomon Street
Griffin, Georgia 30223

Virtual Courtroom Address (URL):

spaldingcountygov.webex.com/meet/spaldingcountystatecourt

Live Stream (URL):

www.facebook.com/SpaldingCountyStateCourt

Preparing for Your Virtual Court Appearance via WebEx Meetings

Whether you plan to use a laptop, tablet, or smartphone to attend your upcoming court date virtually, downloading and becoming familiar with Cisco's WebEx Meetings App is an important place to start. There are many resources available for training, including WebEx's own quick start guide for new users. (Download at: www.webex.com/content/dam/webex/eopi/assets/adoption-toolkits/Quick%20Start-Webex%20Meetings.pdf). You can also join a test meeting to check your audio and video here: www.webex.com/test-meeting.html.

- In addition to becoming familiar with the WebEx Meetings App, it is important to **test** your device's audio, video, and internet connection prior to your scheduled court date. A hardwired internet connection is preferable, when possible, as relying on a wireless connection or cellular data may prove unreliable.
- A desktop or laptop computer with a built-in or external USB webcam with microphone will provide the best audio and video quality, however a tablet or smartphone may be utilized. Some users prefer the audio quality achieved by using headphones, headsets, or earbuds with built-in microphones. Whatever computer, audio, or video equipment you use, test the equipment in the same location and under the same conditions that you will encounter during your virtual court appearance.
- Another important consideration is the **location** you will appear from during your virtual court appearance. Find a quiet, protected place where audio and visual interruptions are minimized or eliminated. Lighting is also critical to think about and test. Light sources should be positioned in front of you to illuminate your face. Light sources located behind you will place your face in the shadows.

EXHIBIT 'A'

- Dress professionally as if you are appearing before the in Court in person. Check the background to see if there is anything distracting, out of place, or unprofessional. Bookcases and plain walls make good backgrounds. Windows and unusual pieces of art do not. Use of a professional-looking virtual background is permissible.
- WebEx will display your name in the lower left-hand corner of the video frame. Please identify yourself by your legal first and last name. You can change your name by editing your WebEx profile settings.
- Nothing will prepare you better for a virtual court appearance than practicing your virtual court appearance. This would be a good time to test the "Share Screen" feature if you plan to present any exhibits during your argument. During the test session, practice leaving the meeting and reconnecting to simulate what to do if there is an interruption in internet service or other technical issues.
- If you encounter difficulties during your virtual court appearance or during your virtual court appearance, contact court personnel as soon as possible to discuss how you can resolve those issues. Make sure you know who to call or email in advance if you need help. Contact the Court's Staff Attorney, Alexander Hope, at alexander.hope@courts.ca.gov or 992/689/66960. Alternatively, you can send a message to the Court's Staff Attorney at alexander.hope@courts.ca.gov.
- Don't forget that you can track your court dates and view or download any documents in your case file via the [Odyssey Portal \(https://gaspaldingprodportal.tylerhost.net/Portal/\)](https://gaspaldingprodportal.tylerhost.net/Portal/).

On Your Court Date

Virtual Lobby

The Virtual Lobby for the Spalding County State Court Courtroom is the waiting area for the Virtual Courtroom, similar to the gallery where you would sit and wait if you were physically in the courtroom. When the Judge is ready to address your case, he will call you in from the Virtual Lobby to the Virtual Courtroom.

Use the following URL to access the Virtual Lobby on the date and at the time you were noticed to appear: spaldingcountygov.webex.com/meet/spaldingcountystatecourt

To do this, open the WebEx Meetings App type in the URL where it says "Join Meeting". Alternatively, you may type the URL into your internet web browser, which will then prompt you to open the WebEx Meetings App and take you directly to the Court's Virtual Lobby (Note: you should **NOT** type in "www" or the URL will not work). The Virtual Lobby is open and accessible 24 hours per day if you wish to arrive early or simply want to practice entering in advance of your court date.

Wait patiently to be called. Do not panic or think you need to re-log in while you are in the Virtual Lobby. The Judge will be notified when you enter the virtual lobby and can always see that you are there. He will bring you in from the Virtual Lobby when he is ready to proceed with your case.

Live Stream

All proceedings of the Spalding County State Court are being live-streamed on the State Court's Facebook page, located at: <https://www.facebook.com/SpaldingCountyStateCourt/>

While you are waiting for your case to be called, you can keep track the Court's progress and often find out about important general information and announcements by paying close attention to the Court's live-stream. **You do NOT need a Facebook account** to access the Court's live stream; anyone can join.

Additionally, the live stream is the best place for other persons such as friends, family members, co-counsel, interested parties, etc., to follow along with what happens regarding your case. All participants in the Virtual Courtroom will be visible throughout the session and the fewer participants we have, the clearer both the audio and visual will be. Please do your best to make sure that any persons interested in keeping track of the proceedings, but who are not necessary for the Court to address your case, use the Facebook live stream and do not attempt to join the Virtual Lobby or the Virtual Courtroom.

Etiquette & Tips

- **Please stay muted** until the Judge recognizes you or it is your turn to speak. By placing yourself on mute while you are not speaking, you will be able to prevent any background noise from interrupting others who may be speaking.
- Speak naturally, but slowly and pronounce each word. If someone cannot hear you then adjust the level on your microphone and ensure that it is not obstructed.
- Sometimes the WebEx Meetings App may not recognize your microphone or might stop recognizing your microphone during your session. If this happens, try using headphones with a built-in microphone. It is a good idea to consider locating headphones with a microphone in advance just in case this happens to you.
- You may sit or stand during the argument, but make sure your head and shoulders are visible on camera. Position yourself near the center of the frame, leaving some room in the frame above your head. The video camera should be as level with your eyes as possible, so that you are looking straight ahead at the camera. Be mindful of your mannerisms. When you are on camera as all other participants and persons viewing the live stream can see you.
- During the argument, there may be a slight audio delay, and if you do not stop talking immediately when you hear a judge speaking you will be talking over each other for a brief time.
- Using the gallery view instead of the speaker view in WebEx will allow you to see all the participants at once. This view may also help you identify who is speaking when multiple people speak at once. It will also more closely simulate standing at the podium in front of the bench, as you would if you were physically in the courtroom.

Exhibits

To share exhibits that are on your screen during your argument, select the “Share Screen” option on the bottom of the screen or press “Alt + S”. **You should practice this thoroughly prior to attempting to do so before your argument.**

To the extent it is possible, consider emailing exhibits you may seek to admit to the Court's Staff Attorney in advance. If you have any concerns about sharing certain documents or other items in advance, please reach out to the court's staff to discuss whether there is any other solution which may work well.