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Athens amends disconnect policy; Municipal Court establishes guidelines

The following COVID-19 protocols have been amended for the City of Athens:

Athens Utilities

Athens Utilities is again extending its suspension of the practice of disconnecting utility services for nonpayment.

Customer Accounts Manager Bill Vaughn said the new extension date is Aug. 2. Customers will be responsible for the full bill amount accrued until payment is made. Vaughn urges customers to pay what they can on their bills to help keep their balances low.

Payments:

- In person at the office at 508 S. Jefferson Street.
- Drive-thru at 508 S. Jefferson Street. Lane is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- Pay online at www.athens-utilities.com. The online company that provides this service does charge a fee.
- Mail bill stub with payment to City of Athens Utilities, P.O. Box 830200, Birmingham, AL, 35283-0200.
- Place bill stub with payment in the night box at the facility at 508 S. Jefferson Street.
- Pay by phone by calling toll free 1-855-760-0921. The company that provides this service does charge a fee.
- Pay by bank draft (no fee). Forms are available:
 - Online at www.athens-utilities.com
 - By calling 256-233-8750
 - By emailing customeraccounts@athens-utilities.com

Athens Municipal Court

Municipal Court Judge Don Mansell has established guidelines for in-person court proceedings that will resume on July 7. They are:

- A mask or face covering is required and must cover the mouth and nose.
- Admittance to the courtroom is limited to defendants and their attorneys. No visitors, spectators or children allowed.
- No persons can remain in the lobby.
- No more than 25 defendants will be admitted at a time.
 - Tuesday dockets: Defendants admitted at scheduled time.
 - Thursday dockets: Defendants admitted in groups of 25 on first come, first serve basis.
- Defendants may check in no sooner than 15 minutes prior to their appointed time. Defendants should not attempt to enter the building before this time. A 30-minute grace period after the scheduled time will be allowed. After this time has passed, defendants will not be admitted but may be assigned another time to appear. Check in is the lobby of the Athens Police Department.
- Those admitted to the courtroom will sit in the seats as they are arranged. Attendees are not allowed to rearrange the seats.
- All parties will maintain a separation of at least 6 feet at all times.

Judge Mansell also established these guidelines for attorneys:

- Cases will be called during their scheduled times only for the Tuesday docket.

- Attorneys will not enter the Clerk's Office or break room but will remain in the courtroom.
- File any motions prior to the court date when possible. Fax these requests to 256-233-6889 or email to court@athensal.us.
- Virtual hearings are an option and can be requested. Fax requests to 256-233-6889 or email to court@athensal.us. Please communicate with Prosecutor Lucas Beaty prior to making the request.

Municipal Court officials strongly encourage persons over the age of 65, persons who are considered high risk, persons who have experienced symptoms of COVID-19 or have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 30 days to not appear in court. Those persons can contact the Clerk's Office for assistance. That number is 256-233-8733.

Municipal Court Administrator Jodi Whitt asks defendants who have moved to make sure the court has their correct addresses. Notices are going out this week.