Video Conferencing Hearings: How to Use Zoom

HON. CHRISTOPHER G. MORALES, JUDGE
FORT BEND COUNTY COURT AT LAW NO. 1
JUNE 2, 2020

What you Need to Get Started

- Computer with a Video Camera and Microphone



- Smartphone or Tablet



- Telephone



Software Needed for Video Conferencing

- Zoom Client Application
  - Download at Zoom.us
  - The application is titled: Zoom Client for Meetings

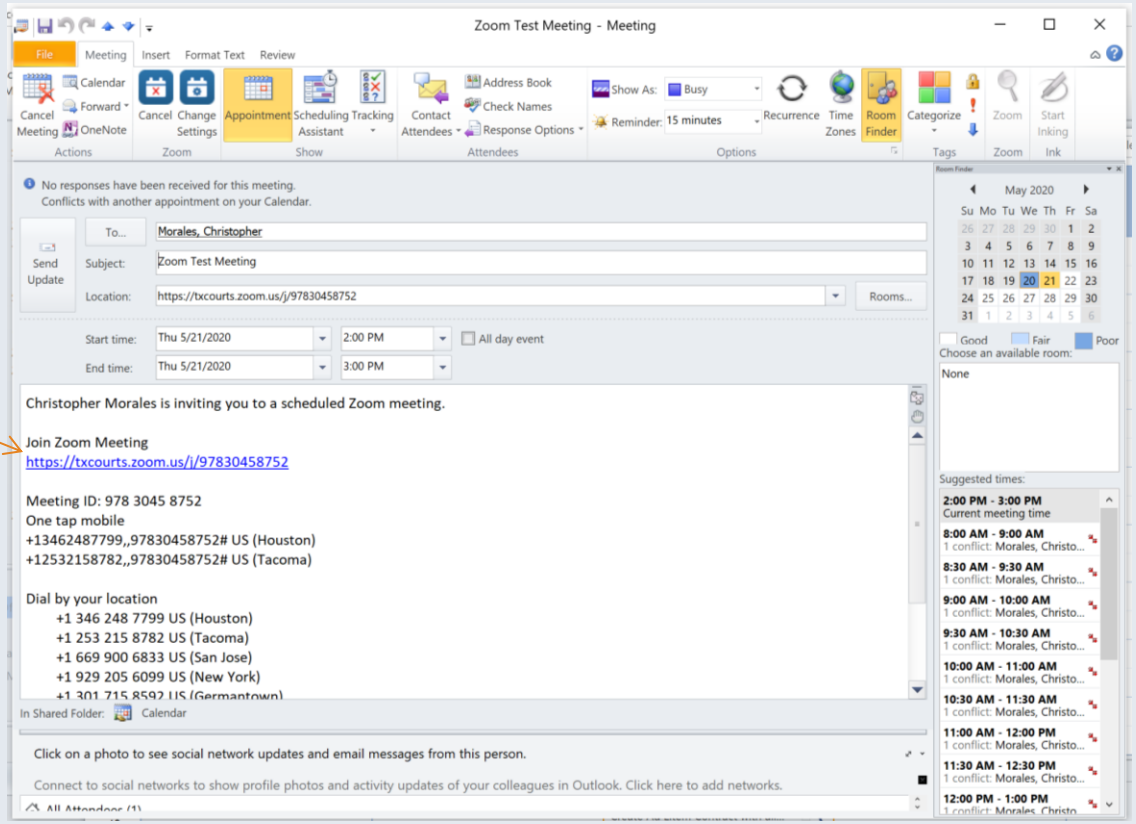


Requesting your Zoom Hearing from the Court

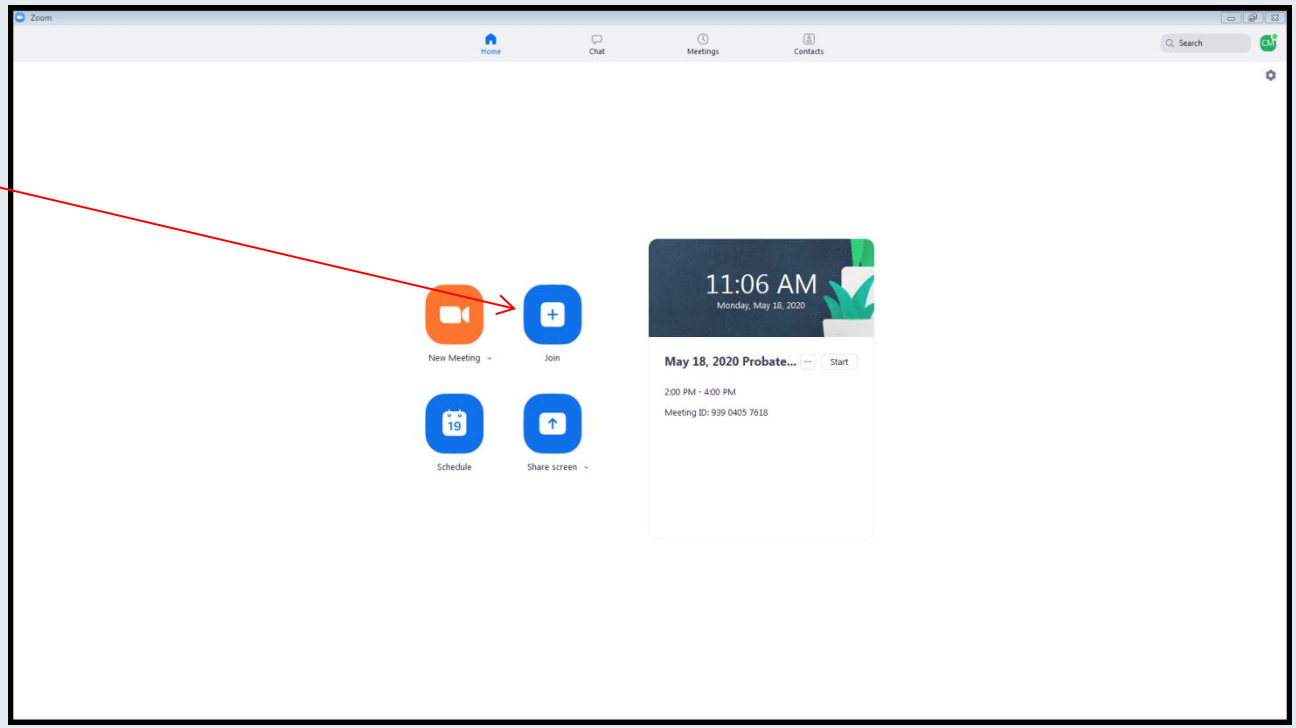
- **Requesting a Hearing:**
  - Request a hearing date and time by contacting the Court Coordinator, Regina Green at regina.green@fortbendcountytx.gov for Criminal, Juvenile and Civil hearings or the Probate Auditor, Anita Ayala, at anita.ayala@fortbendcountytx.gov for all Probate and Guardianship hearings. You MUST indicate in your hearing request the following:
    - The type of hearing requested;
    - Whether an interpreter is necessary and the required language;
    - The anticipated length of the entire hearing; and
    - The names of all those (attorneys, litigants/defendants, and witnesses) who will be participating in the hearing.
  - You will receive a confirmation email from Ms. Green or Mrs. Ayala with the Zoom meeting details (link/Meeting ID), which may be saved to your calendar.
  - The scheduling party is responsible for noticing other party/parties of the video conference hearing and details for login. Additionally, in all civil matters:
    - The Notice of Hearings MUST be eFiled; and
    - The Notice shall state:
      - The hearing is taking place by video conference; and
      - Must contain the Zoom conference details (Meeting ID) generated by the Court Coordinator.

The Email/Calendar Invite You Will Receive from the Court

Click on the Link

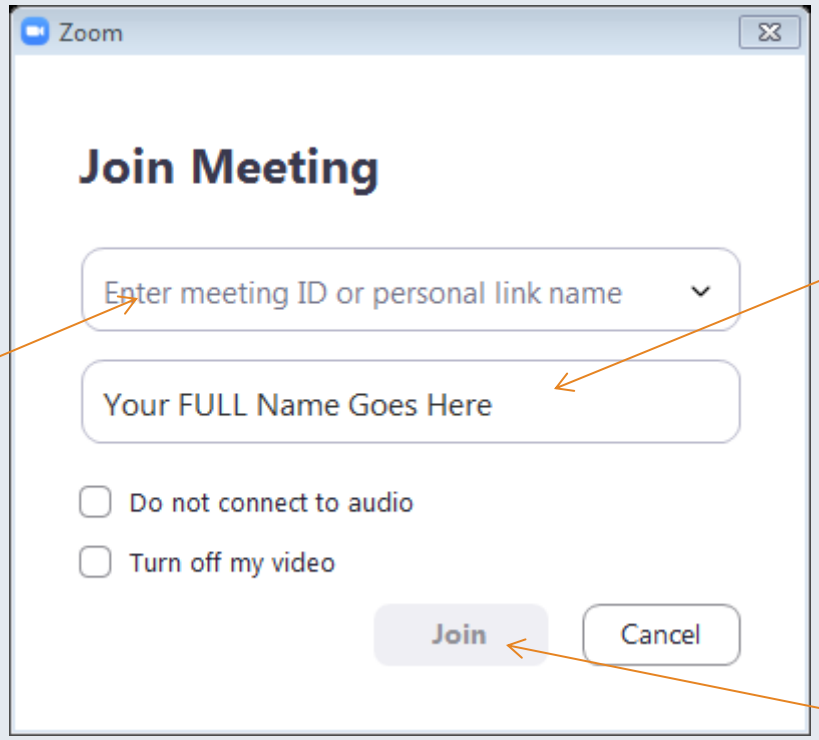


Day of the Hearing - Logging into Zoom



Please Log into Zoom 10 Minutes Prior to Your Scheduled Start Time

Logging into Zoom

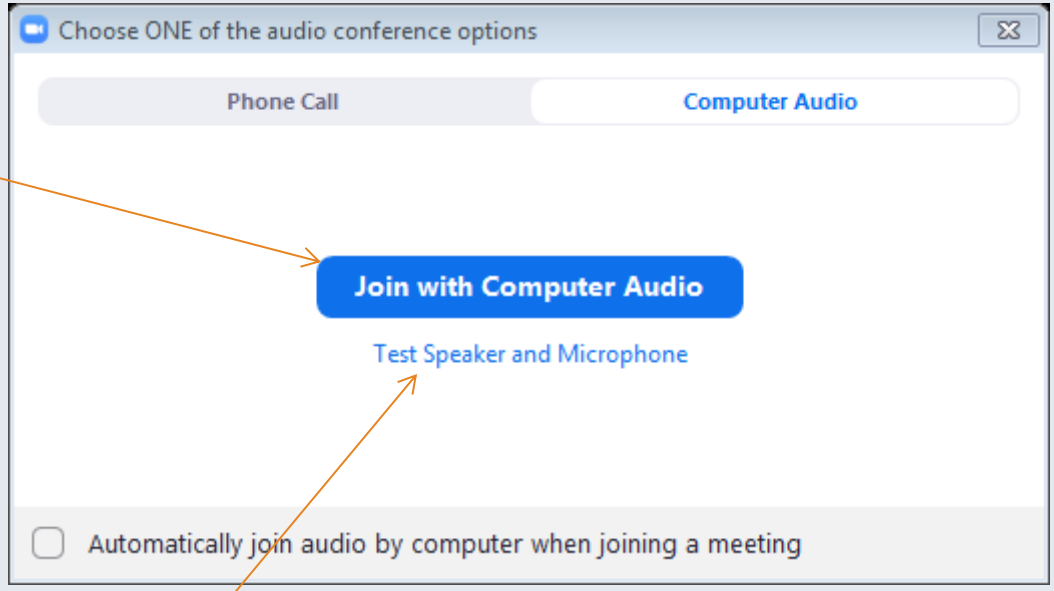


Enter Meeting ID

FULL Name

Click Here

Logging into Zoom

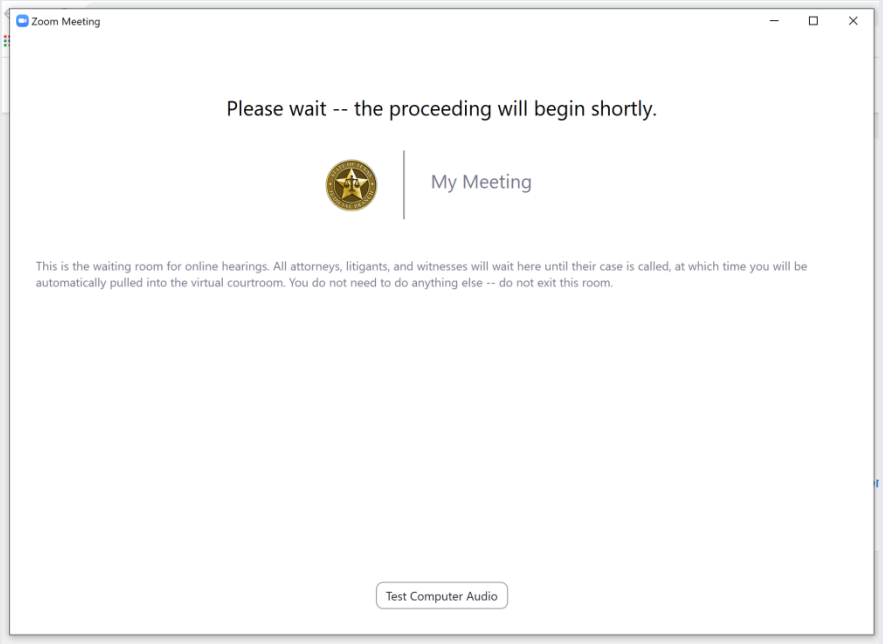


Click Here to Start

I highly Recommend You Test Your Audio Before Clicking the Join Button

You are In!

- Welcome to the Virtual Waiting Room
- Once your case is called you will be brought into the Virtual Courtroom.



Rules for a Zoom Hearing

- Everyone is Expected to Adhere to the Court's Video Conferencing Policy & Procedures.

- Some of the more important requirements are as follows:
  - Recording of a Remote Zoom Proceeding is Strictly Forbidden and subject to contempt;
  - The scheduling Party is responsible for noticing all parties of a hearing or cancellation;
  - Exhibits must be submitted to the Court Reporter three days prior to the hearing;
  - The Court is not responsible for displaying exhibits during a hearing;
  - You may not use the chat feature to communicate with a witness;
  - You may not use the chat feature to communicate with your client, when they are testifying;
  - Witnesses may not hold notes or paperwork in their hands while testifying;
  - Participants should minimize outside noise and distractions during the hearing;
  - All participants should enter the waiting room at least 10 minutes prior to the hearing start time;
  - Technical difficulties that are not timely resolved, may result in a hearing being passed; and
  - All of the usual in-person courtroom decorum, demeanor, and dress code rules shall apply.

- I recommend you read the Court's Video Conferencing Policy & Procedures well in advance of your hearing. Failure to adhere to these rules may result in a party's hearing being passed/canceled or contempt proceedings.

What to Expect at the Hearing

- **General/Civil**
  - Interpreters Can be Utilized in Zoom
  - Jury Trials are prohibited for the time being
  - Exhibits –
    - 3 days before hearing get them to the Court Reporter
    - Utilize Share Your Screen feature
    - You are Responsible for Them
  - Mediation can be done through Zoom
  - Breakout Rooms available for private meetings between the Attorney and Client

- **Criminal & Juvenile:**
  - Criminal – we are only conducting Zoom for motions hearings
  - Juvenile – all hearings are held via Zoom
    - Paperwork will be handled through Dropbox

What to Expect at the Hearing

- **Probate & Guardianship**
  - Letters of Testamentary
    - Ask the Court to take Judicial Notice of the Original Will
    - You may have your client refer to a physical copy of the will during testimony, or you may share your screen to display a copy of the will for your client.
  - Executed documents (Oath, Testimony, Etc.) with a Virtual Notary or through an Unsworn Declaration
  - Contested Matters
    - Zoom hearings on contested Probate matters is limited to 10 witnesses and 10 exhibits. If you anticipated your hearing exceeding these limitations, an in-person hearing will be required.

Court Contacts

If you have a questions, just email or call the Court!

- Anita “Annie” Ayala– Probate Auditor
  - Telephone: (281) 633-7413
  - Email: anita.ayala@fortbendcountytx.gov
- Regina Green – Court Coordinator
  - Telephone: (832) 471-2822
  - Email: regina.green@fortbendcountytx.gov
- Debbie Davenport – Admin. Clerk
  - Telephone: (281) 633-7415
  - Email: debra.davenport@fortbendcountytx.gov
- Website: http://www.fortbendcountytx.gov/index.aspx?page=148