



News Release

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Charleston County Magistrate Court Launches Pilot Night Court Program

North Area Magistrate begins monthly night court; McClellanville Magistrate adds hours to services

In an effort to provide better access to court services, the North Area Magistrate Court 3, located at 6185 Rivers Avenue, Suite E in North Charleston, has started a pilot program in which the court will operate during night hours once a month. In addition, the McClellanville Magistrate Court, located at 10009 Highway 17 North in McClellanville, will add another day to its services.

The changes for the North Area Magistrate, presided over by Magistrate Joanna Summey include:

- Addition of night hours of court the third Thursday of every month from 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.
- Services during night court include traffic court, taking payments as well as allowing citizens to file civil complaints.

The pilot program was launched in January and its duration is for six months, when it will be evaluated.

The changes for the McClellanville Magistrate Court, presided over by Magistrate Frances Cain-Lofton include:

- Extended hours: Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

“We received requests from citizens regarding extending hours,” said Chief Magistrate Ellen Steinberg. “We wanted to be responsive to the needs of the community.”

Background on Magistrate Courts:

Magistrates have criminal trial jurisdiction over all offenses which are subject to the penalty of a fine not exceeding \$500 or imprisonment not exceeding 30 days, or both. Magistrates issue warrants, set bonds and hear criminal and traffic cases, as well as preliminary hearings. Unlike circuit courts and probate courts, magistrate courts are not courts of record. Proceedings in magistrates' courts are summary. Traffic tickets may be paid with money orders or certified checks made payable to the court. Traffic tickets may also be paid online.

Magistrates also have civil jurisdiction when the amount in controversy does not exceed \$7,500 and may include such matters as summons and complaint, landlord/tenant actions, trespass, sales of abandoned property and claim and delivery. Magistrates may also issue restraining orders on non-family members.

There are 18 magistrates in Charleston County. They are appointed by the Governor upon the advice and consent of the Senate for four year terms and until their successors are appointed and qualified.

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