

NOTICE TO THE BAR

SOMERSET COUNTY – ONGOING AFTERNOON CALENDARS FOR LANDLORD/TENANT MATTERS

As noted in Judge Grant's February 28, 2020 notice to the bar, the formal pilot program for extended court calendars for landlord/tenant hearings has concluded.

This notice announces that Somerset County will continue to offer afternoon calendars on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month, from 3:30 p.m. to up to 6:30 p.m. Some cases will be randomly assigned to the afternoon calendars while parties assigned to morning sessions also may request to reschedule to the afternoon sessions.

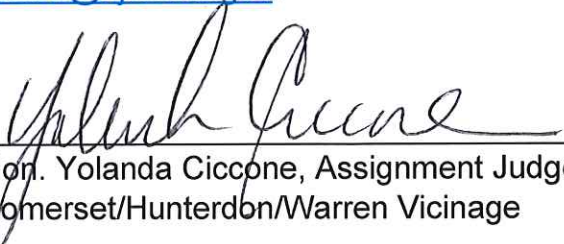
The Somerset County Superior Court Special Civil Part currently schedules landlord/tenant matters on the first and third Friday of each month, starting at 9:00 a.m. These regular calendars will continue.

Somerset County will offer two additional calendars, on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month, from 3:30 p.m. to up to 6:30 p.m. Some cases will be randomly assigned to the afternoon calendars. Either party may object to the late afternoon calendar assignment and request rescheduling to a regular daytime calendar. Objections must be submitted to SomLT.mailbox@njcourts.gov, on notice to the other party, at least three business days in advance of the scheduled hearing date and will be decided by the Supervising Special Civil Part judge.

In addition to random assignment of cases, tenants and landlords may request to be rescheduled from a daytime calendar to a late afternoon calendar. Requests must be on notice to the other party and submitted at least three business days in advance by email to SomLT.mailbox@njcourts.gov or by contacting the Special Civil Part office at (908) 332-7700.

The summons issued to tenants will include an explanatory notice. Parties and attorneys in landlord/tenant cases may be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their participation or non-participation in the late afternoon calendars.

Questions may be directed to Somerset County Assistant Civil Division Manager Reta Wahba at (908) 332-7700 or Reta.Wahba@njcourts.gov.



Hon. Yolanda Ciccone, Assignment Judge
Somerset/Hunterdon/Warren Vicinage

Dated: March 2, 2020

NOTICE TO THE BAR

LANDLORD/TENANT – CONTINUATION AND POTENTIAL EXPANSION OF OPTIONAL AFTERNOON CALENDARS; CONCLUSION OF FORMAL PILOT PROGRAM

This notice announces the successful completion of the pilot program for afternoon calendars for landlord/tenant matters, as authorized by the Supreme Court for initial implementation in Somerset County. As set forth in the May 8, 2019 notice to the bar, the Court authorized exploration of landlord/tenant calendars extending after 4:30 p.m. as one method of facilitating access to and participation in court proceedings, especially for persons who face obstacles to appearing during standard court hours. The experience in Somerset will inform expansion of the optional afternoon scheduling model as customized by additional vicinages.

As part of the pilot implementation in Somerset County, we asked participants (tenants, landlords, and attorneys) to submit brief surveys regarding their experiences, including their views on the afternoon as compared to the morning calendar. The information shared demonstrated that some court users – especially self-represented tenants – preferred the afternoon option, which supported them in working during the day rather than missing work to appear in court. Other participants recommended revisions to the timing of the calendar and/or to the types of cases scheduled after 4:30 p.m. Based on this input, Somerset County will be refining its afternoon program (as will be announced by Assignment Judge Ciccone in a separate notice to the bar).

The takeaways from the Somerset County pilot show that there can be a benefit to adding afternoon calendars (in addition to regular morning sessions) for landlord/tenant matters. On this basis, we are concluding the formal pilot program while encouraging other vicinages to consider reviewing and possibly adding an afternoon calendar for landlord/tenant hearings. For counties that choose to pursue this option, Assignment Judges will determine with input from stakeholders the frequency of afternoon calendars, starting and ending times, and procedures for requesting inclusion on morning or afternoon calendars and for rescheduling between multiple calendar options.

Questions on this notice may be directed to Assistant Director for Civil Practice Taironda Phoenix at (609) 815-2900 x54900 or Taironda.Phoenix@njcourts.gov.

Handwritten signature of Glenn A. Grant in blue ink, with the initials "SDB" written below the signature.

Hon. Glenn A. Grant, J.A.D.

Dated: February 28, 2020