

## **PROTOCOL FOR CHAPTER 13 HEARINGS**

The Honorable Maria Ellena Chavez-Ruark  
(Effective November 18, 2020)

1. All Chapter 13 confirmation hearings will be conducted remotely by use of Zoom for Government (“Zoomgov”) videoconference technology. These procedures apply to all matters scheduled for hearing on a regular Chapter 13 docket day.
2. The Court will establish a Zoomgov meeting for each Chapter 13 Trustee’s docket. The log-in information (Zoomgov meeting ID number and password) will be communicated to parties by the Chapter 13 Trustee.
3. Attorneys and their clients (and unrepresented debtors) are expected to work cooperatively with Chapter 13 Trustees to resolve issues by the end of the day before the scheduled hearing.
4. Up until 30 minutes before the scheduled hearing time, the Chapter 13 Trustees will continue to work with parties to resolve issues so that as many cases as possible can be dealt with on a consensual basis at the time of the podium call. If a consensual resolution is reached, the Chapter 13 Trustee will advise parties that they are excused from appearance at the hearing.
5. If the parties expect a confirmation hearing to involve lengthy testimony and the introduction of exhibits, they should contact the Courtroom Deputy and arrange for the hearing to be specially set.
6. All parties should connect to the Zoomgov videoconference hearing at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled hearing time.
7. All attorneys, clients, and other parties are expected to adhere to social distancing and other safety guidelines, as well as any applicable orders restricting activities, when participating in the Zoomgov videoconference hearing.
8. Before Judge Ruark takes the bench and any cases are called, the Courtroom Deputy and Chapter 13 Trustee will identify the parties, make organizational announcements, and advise the parties of the order in which cases will be called.
9. All parties will be placed on mute until their case is called and they are called upon by Judge Ruark.
10. The Court will dismiss parties from the Zoomgov videoconference as their hearing is completed.
11. Parties are strongly encouraged to participate by videoconference (*i.e.*, not by telephone only), wear court appropriate attire, and participate from a quiet space.

12. If you have questions about these procedures, you may contact Judge Ruark's Chambers by email at [hearings\\_MCR@mdb.uscourts.gov](mailto:hearings_MCR@mdb.uscourts.gov). You should also review the Court's general videoconference protocols available on the Court's webpage at [www.mdb.uscourts.gov/hearings](http://www.mdb.uscourts.gov/hearings) and Judge Ruark's Protocol for Conduct of Hearing by Telephone or Videoconference available on the Court's webpage at <https://www.mdb.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/Ruark-Protocol-Hearing.pdf>.
13. If parties encounter technical difficulties during a Zoomgov videoconference hearing, they may contact Judge Ruark's Courtroom Deputy at [hearings\\_MCR@mdb.uscourts.gov](mailto:hearings_MCR@mdb.uscourts.gov) or Chambers at (301) 344-3377.
14. These procedures for regularly scheduled Chapter 13 confirmation hearings will remain in effect until further notice.