

Prior Lake American

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FILE PHOTO
Scott County's Government and Justice Center.

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Remote court hearings may be here to stay

But informality has its drawbacks

BY MICHAEL STRASBURG
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As Minnesota's COVID-19 restrictions were lifted over the summer months, discussions about retaining some innovations developed out of pandemic limitations began popping up in all sectors of life.

One discussion currently being held is centered on remote court hearings, which, over the course of the pandemic, have made it easier for many defendants, plaintiffs and litigators to have their day in court — sometimes at the cost of decorum and formality.

"I've more than once had to say to someone 'You need to put a shirt on, this is court,' 'You need to stop smoking,' 'You need to leave the grocery store,' 'You need



PHOTO COURTESY OF CARVER COUNTY

A vacant courtroom in Carver County. The continuation of remote hearings post pandemic could improve access to the justice system.

to pull your car over and stop.' I've said all of those things out loud to people in court — that's a new area for me," said Judge Caroline Lennon, Scott County District Court, of remote hearings.

Despite the inconveniences, some court leaders are hoping to extend the use of remote hearings indefinitely.

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