

Grace Hollowell:

Good morning, everyone. My name is Grace Hollowell with the City of College Station, and my guest today is College Station Municipal Court Judge Edward Spillane. Good morning.

Judge Ed Spillane:

Good morning.

Grace Hollowell:

Alrighty. So today we're here to talk about the warrant amnesty and roundup, correct?

Judge Ed Spillane:

That's correct. Starting tomorrow, Monday, October 17th, for three weeks, if you have an outstanding ticket or think you have an outstanding ticket or don't know and want to check, we're going to offer a warrant amnesty. Our court and all the JP courts in Brazos County will offer warrant amnesty and what that means is if you come to the court, take care of your ticket, then I'll waive the warrant fee. And most importantly, you won't get arrested.

Grace Hollowell:

All right. That sounds like it's a pretty important thing for people here.

Judge Ed Spillane:

A lot of people don't know, but in Texas a traffic case is a criminal case. So you can be arrested if you don't show up for a speeding ticket and don't come to court. And individuals can look at our website, cstx.gov/court and see if you have a warrant or if your friend has a warrant or your neighbor has a warrant. For three weeks from October 17th to November 4th, we offer a warrant amnesty, and then chances are if you didn't come in during the amnesty, from November 5th to November 13th, we offer a warrant roundup. So, officers will be focusing on Class C misdemeanor warrants in terms of arresting people.

Grace Hollowell:

Gotcha. And what types of violations would that be under?

Judge Ed Spillane:

They could be a traffic, like I mentioned, but it also could be disorderly conduct noise. It could be a city ordinance violation, more than four, unrelated. People can get an ordinance violation for leaving your trash can out too long. Assault cases, driving under the influence, minor in possession. We do everything. We call people when they get tickets. My goal is not to have people arrested, but to come to court. If you come to court, we can offer payment plans. There's no reason to get arrested. It costs you more. Plus if you get arrested, then you're booking photos online. It's just not a good deal. So we do this warrant amnesty. And you're so helpful with getting the word out to the public to get people just to come to court.

Grace Hollowell:

And how long has this been going on? Is this a new program?

Judge Ed Spillane:

Well, we've done it for years. We've done it over 20 years. But it became so popular, we do it twice a year. So we do one in the spring and one in the fall. And the JP courts work with us. Sometimes people aren't really sure or they don't know which court. And so if you call us, we can direct you to the right court as well.

Grace Hollowell:

So the warrant fee, that is waived during this period also, correct?

Judge Ed Spillane:

Right. There's a \$50 warrant fee for each case and usually at the minimum you'll have your main case and you'll have a failure to appear because you didn't show up. So that \$50 fee I'll waive if you come in and take care of your case completely. Now, if you're driving around with a warrant during the warrant amnesty and you get stopped by the police for something and they look up and see you have an active warrant, they'll arrest you during that amnesty period. But if you come to our court, then we'll work with you. And it's a win for us and it's a win for you because you get that waive. But, the worst thing that comes out of my court are people being arrested. It's never a convenient time.

Grace Hollowell:

It's never convenient for anybody, you or the defendants.

Judge Ed Spillane:

Exactly, exactly. And nowadays too, if you get arrested, then that can follow you for years onwards because that's on the internet that you were booked and you were arrested. We work with people on that, but you really just need to call up and work with us.

Grace Hollowell:

Perfect. So the main focus to take away from this is to double check your record to see if you have a warrant, so the cctx.gov/court, to keep on top of things for yourself and for your friends. That's all open record, correct?

Judge Ed Spillane:

Exactly. It's right there on our website and we offer forms and other things. Our phone line is 979-764-3683. So you can give a call while we're open. We're open from eight to five, but yes, we give a list. Yeah, that's an open record. We update that and we take people's names off as soon as people clear their warrants.

Grace Hollowell:

Right. And is there anything else that everybody should know about the warrant amnesty and roundup?

Judge Ed Spillane:

The main thing is all year round, if someone comes to court and they have a warrant, we won't arrest you right in the courtroom. I mean, we consider the court a safe harbor, so I really work with people, and I'm not saying this just for the court's convenience, it really is helpful to people. The worst thing you

can do is ignore a ticket. It's not the end of the world, it's not a murder case, but a lot of people think, "Oh, if I ignore it, it'll just go away." Or we have a lot of people who move out of town, but you can lose your driving privileges and you can be arrested anywhere, which is not a good thing. So just call the court, we'll work with you. We understand that people sometimes need time to pay or they may need to do community service, but the main thing is contact the court, our court or whatever court you have a warrant.

Grace Hollowell:

Perfect, and can you explain a little more about the period of not getting arrested during this time? How does that work?

Judge Ed Spillane:

During the three weeks, we're encouraging people to come in and we'll waive the warrant fee, but officers are out there. A lot of times the way people get arrested on our type of warrants is when another traffic stop occurs. Whenever there's a traffic stop, they'll look you up and see the active warrant and you'll get arrested. Now during the warrant roundup from November 5th to November 13th, officers are actively looking and working those cases because people obviously didn't take advantage of the amnesty. So, we use that period again to urge people to come in. At any point, if you just come to our court, you're not going to be arrested on our warrants in our court no matter what time of the year. And so it's always a good time to come in. But officers do, these are active warrants like any other warrants, and it's an order to an officer to arrest someone. So you don't want to be arrested.

Grace Hollowell:

Right. Nobody wants to be arrested.

Judge Ed Spillane:

You also don't want to lose your driving privileges too. We have people who leave out of state, but then they lose their driving privileges because they never took care of their case. So you don't want to do that because that can affect your work and other things.

Grace Hollowell:

Right. Well, is there anything else they need to know?

Judge Ed Spillane:

I think that's it. I think we've covered it.

Grace Hollowell:

All right. Well, thank you, Judge. And that's stuff you don't usually see.