



For Immediate Release

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City of Kentwood Celebrates Judge William G. Kelly's 42 Years of Service *Community Invited to Join Virtual Celebration of Judge Kelly's Retirement*

Kentwood, Michigan, Dec. 7, 2020 – After a distinguished law career spanning more than four decades, Judge William G. Kelly of Kentwood's 62-B District Court will retire effective Jan. 1, 2021.

Kelly has served the Kentwood community as the City's first and only district court judge since 1979. He was elected in November 1978, following his father, Joseph Kelly, who served as Kentwood's municipal judge from 1971-79. In 2014, he was re-elected for his seventh and final six-year term. Kelly has led a team of nearly 25 court personnel to serve the community with the highest standards of justice.

A retirement celebration to honor Kelly's career will be held virtually at 3 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 30. The event will include remarks by Chief Justice McCormack and other distinguished speakers. Colleagues, community members and the media are invited to attend via Zoom – Meeting ID 4280940961 – or the [62-B District Court YouTube Channel](#).

"Judge Kelly has been an invaluable asset to Kentwood and the West Michigan area," Kentwood Mayor Stephen Kepley said. "His dedication to our community has been demonstrated by his service on the bench along with his many accomplishments for our court system. We wish Judge Kelly the best as he moves into retirement and we sincerely thank him for his leadership in directing Kentwood's 62-B District Court for these past 42 years."

During his tenure, Kelly instituted several programs, including the Sobriety Court and mediation of small claims cases. Kelly was also instrumental in implementing modern technology in the court. Additionally, he conducted more than 4,000 weddings throughout his time as district court judge.

"I have been fortunate to have had a great law career," Kelly said. "I have loved serving this community for so many years and I am grateful for all the opportunities that have helped me become a better judge. We have a great team at 62-B District Court, and I look forward to seeing the court's future accomplishments and growth."

Kelly explored ways technology could better serve the justice system and Kentwood community. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 62-B District Court quickly adapted and created a virtual court on Zoom with a livestream on its YouTube Channel. Kelly also has worked with the Supreme Court to implement a paperless system throughout the state to begin in the near future.

"With its challenges, the pandemic has brought innovation to Michigan courtrooms as we look at ways we can continue to conduct court safely in the interest of justice," Kelly said "I am proud of the virtual court we have been able to establish for Kentwood in my last year."

Active professionally, Kelly has served as faculty for a number of programs. He has been a teaching faculty member of the Michigan Judicial Institute's new judge's program since 1985. He has taught classes on several

topics at the National Judicial College since 2002. He also has served as adjunct faculty at Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley Law School on the use of technology in advanced trial practice and presented at the National Center for State Courts' court technology conferences.

Kelly served on the Foreign Language Board of Review and is a member of the Legislative Committee of the Michigan District Judges Association. He previously served as chair of the National Conference of the Special Court Judges of the American Bar Association or ABA, chair of the Judicial Conference of the State Bar of Michigan, president of the Michigan District Judges Association, chair of the ABA's Judicial Division Committee on its traffic court program, member of the board of trustees of the Grand Rapids Bar Association and member of the board of directors of the National Center for State Courts.

“Over the years, I have enjoyed being involved in judicial associations and education programs both statewide and nationwide,” Kelly said. “These activities have enriched my career and have given me ideas to lead this court.”

Prior to his career with Kentwood, Kelly served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ghana from 1970-72, teaching math in a secondary school. He then went onto become an assistant prosecutor with the Kalamazoo Prosecutor's Office from 1975-77. Following that role, he served as a defense attorney in the Kent County Office of the Private Defender until 1978 when he became 62-B District Court judge.

Kelly has received numerous awards throughout his career, including: Donald R. Worsfold Award from the Grand Rapids Bar Association, Marian Hilligan Public Service Award from WMU-Cooley Law School, William R. McMahon Award from the ABA for the most significant implementation of technological advances in a court of limited or special jurisdiction, Judicial Excellence Award from the Michigan District Judges Association, Peacemaker Award from the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan and St. Thomas More Award from the Catholic Lawyers Association of West Michigan.

Kelly is a graduate of the University of Detroit and the University of Detroit School of Law. He is a longtime resident of Kentwood. He has five children and three grandchildren. In his retirement, Kelly plans to travel and to serve as a visiting judge and mediate small claims disputes.

Amanda Sterkenburg will succeed Kelly as district court judge effective Jan. 1, 2021. As a private practice attorney, Sterkenburg has handled both criminal and civil cases, including landlord-tenant disputes.

The 62-B District Court strives to earn the public's trust and confidence by providing a fair and just forum for the resolution of civil and criminal dispute, providing services in a professional, timely and efficient manner with respect and courtesy, educating and providing services in an understandable and user-friendly fashion, being accountable for the resources invested in the court and recognizing the changing needs of the judicial system and the people it serves. For additional information, contact Court Administrator Michele White at 616.554.0715 or whitem@kentwood.us.

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