



SUPREME COURT OF GEORGIA

Atlanta July 14, 2016

The Honorable Supreme Court met pursuant to adjournment.

The following order was passed:

It is ordered that the Atlanta Judicial Circuit Rule 1004 formerly governing the Fulton County Superior Court Business Case Division be renamed “Metro Atlanta Business Case Division” and revised to allow voluntarily participating metro Atlanta counties to adopt this Rule within its own circuit, effective July 14, 2016, as follows:

ATLANTA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT RULE 1004 METRO ATLANTA BUSINESS CASE DIVISION

1.

The Judges of the Superior Court of Fulton County created the Business Case Division with approval of the Supreme Court of Georgia pursuant to Uniform Superior Court Rule 1.2 (D) on June 3, 2005 (as amended on June 7, 2007, May 6, 2009, September 1, 2010, October 11, 2012, and May 7, 2015) which shall be referred to as the “Metro Atlanta Business Case Division” (hereinafter referred to as the “Division”).

2.

The purpose of the Division is to provide judicial attention and expertise to and uniform administration of certain complex Business Cases filed in the superior and state courts of voluntarily participating metro Atlanta counties (hereinafter referred to as the “Adopting Metro Court(s)”). Any Adopting Metro Court may join the Division with the consent of the Business Case Division Committee (hereinafter referred to as the “Division Committee”) by adopting this rule within its own Circuit.

3.

Case selection and administrative decision-making of the Division will be the responsibility of the current Division Committee. Each Adopting Metro Court shall be represented by not less than one Judge who is designated a Division Committee Member. A full-time Business Division Program Director will manage the day-to-day administration of the Division.

4.

(a) The Division Committee may accept for assignment Business Cases, which include actions brought pursuant or subject to the following:

- (i) Georgia Uniform Securities Act of 2008, as amended, OCGA § 10-5-1 et seq.;
- (ii) Uniform Commercial Code, OCGA § 11-1-101 et seq.;
- (iii) Georgia Business Corporation Code, OCGA § 14-2-101 et seq.;
- (iv) Uniform Partnership Act, OCGA § 14-8-1 et seq.;
- (v) Uniform Limited Partnership Act, OCGA § 14-9A-1 et seq.;
- (vi) Georgia Revised Uniform Limited Partnership Act, OCGA § 14-9-100 et seq.;
- (vii) Georgia Limited Liability Company Act, OCGA § 14-11-100 et seq.; and
- (viii) Georgia International Commercial Arbitration Code, OCGA § 9-9-20 et seq.

In addition, Business Cases may include any action in which the amount in controversy (or, in a case of injunctive relief the value of the relief sought or the cost of not getting the relief) exceeds \$1,000,000 and where one or more parties to the action or the Judge currently assigned that case believes warrants the attention of the Division, including, but not limited to, large contractual and business tort cases as well as other complex commercial litigation involving a material issue related to the law governing corporations, partnerships, limited partnerships, limited liability partnerships, and limited liability companies, including issues concerning governance, involuntary dissolution of a corporation, mergers and acquisitions, breach of duty of directors, election or removal of directors, enforcement or interpretation of shareholder agreements, derivative actions and/or arbitration.

(b) Notwithstanding anything contained herein to the contrary, a case that includes the following claims shall not be classified as a Business Case without the consent of all parties:

- (i) Personal injury;
- (ii) Wrongful death;
- (iii) Employment discrimination; and
- (iv) Consumer claims in which each individual plaintiff's claims are in the aggregate less than \$1,000,000.

5.

The Division is to be comprised of at least two Judges (the "Division Judge" or "Division Judges") who manage, administer, and try the cases assigned to this Division within their own County, as the Chief Judge shall designate upon recommendation of the Division Committee. The Division Judges may select a Judge to serve as the head of the Division (the "Division Leader"), who will be in charge of addressing issues with regard to case assignment, creating and implementing Division policies, representing the Division to the public, and performing all other functions that are necessary for the administration of this Division.

6.

A Business Case filed in the Superior Court of Fulton County or an Adopting Metro Court shall be eligible for assignment to the Division based upon: (1) the parties' joint request; (2) the motion of a party; or (3) a request submitted by the Superior Court or State Court Judge currently assigned that case, with notice to the parties. By filing a motion to transfer a case into the Division pursuant to subsections (1) or (2) above, the movant(s) agrees pursuant to OCGA § 15-6-77 (1) to pay, pro rata, a transfer fee in an amount not to exceed \$2,500 as set forth in the "Standing Order Regarding Transfer Fee Amount" for the applicable County as currently published online at <http://home.fultoncourt.org/> ("Transfer Fee") to be used solely for the Division. Pursuant to Uniform Superior Court Rule 1.2 (B), the Clerk of Court shall maintain the original of such Standing Order and provide copies of it, upon request. In the event that a Superior Court or State Court Judge requests that a case be assigned to the Division pursuant to subsection (3), no such Transfer Fee shall be required. The motion or request shall be directed to the Division Committee, via the Business Division Program Director, to determine, after allowing the parties twenty (20) days for briefing of the issue, whether the case is a Business Case Division case and whether it should be accepted for assignment into the Business Case Division. Pursuant to Uniform Superior Court Rule 6.7, the Chief Judge may shorten the time requirement applicable to transfer motions upon written notice and good cause shown. If so accepted, the Business Division Program Director shall reassign the case to a Division Judge within the originating county.

7.

Upon a motion or request, if a majority of the Division Committee deems the case appropriate for assignment to the Division, the Business Division Program Director shall assign the case to the Division. Within the Division, the Business Court Program Director shall assign the Division's cases in rotation, taking into account reasonably estimated discovery, dispositive motions, availability of the Division Judge, the Division Judge's current case load, and trial time, as far as practicable, and any other applicable concerns. The Business Court Program Director shall make every effort to fairly assign the case load within the Division. In Adopting Metro Counties in which both superior and state courts have adopted the program, the Business Case will be assigned to either a Superior Court or State Court Division Judge regardless of the court into which it was filed. However, the Business Case shall remain in the County in which it was filed.

8.

When an active Judge's case has been reassigned to a Division Judge as a Business Case, the Court Administrator shall make such additional assignments to the

active Judge as are necessary to comply with these rules.

9.

The Division Committee will recommend and the Chief Judge/District Administrative Judge shall select or re-select all Division Judges from those Judges, considering their experience, training, and other relevant factors, who volunteer for such assignment for a period of two years. At the end of each two-year term, the Chief Judge/District Administrative Judge shall decide the continuation of such assignment if the Division Judge volunteers for continued service. The Chief Judge/District Administrative Judge may reassign such Division Judge at any time in the best interests of the Court and the Division.

10.

The Business Cases assigned to the Division shall be governed by applicable law, including the Georgia Civil Practice Act, OCGA § 9-11-1 et seq., and the Uniform Superior and/or State Court Rules.

11.

The Division Judges, in consultation with all parties and pursuant to applicable law, shall have the ability to modify the schedule for the administration of Business Cases, including the schedule for conducting discovery, filing dispositive motions, conducting pre-trial procedures, and conducting jury and non-jury trials.

12.

In particular, the Division Judges, pursuant to OCGA § 9-11-5 (e), may modify the procedure for filing papers with the Court, including allowing such filings to be made by facsimile or by e-mail with the Court. Upon the written consent of all parties and upon any necessary waivers as may be required by law, the Division Judges may allow for service of papers filed with the Court by electronic means, including by e-mail or an electronic filing service in accordance with Uniform Superior and State Court Rule 36.16. In the event that any procedures are modified pursuant to this paragraph, an electronic signature shall be deemed an original signature.

13.

The Division Judges, in consultation with all parties, shall have the ability to order nonbinding mediation, nonbinding arbitration, or other means of alternative dispute resolution as dictated by the needs of a particular Business Case. The Division Judges themselves, with the consent of all parties, may conduct such nonbinding mediation, nonbinding arbitration, or other means of alternative dispute resolution.

14.

The calendar for the Division shall be prepared and maintained by the Business Court Program Director under the supervision of the Division Judges and shall be made available to all parties with Business Cases pending in the Division. Pursuant to agreement of the parties and the Division, the Division may notify parties of such calendar by electronic means, including by e-mail or by publication by website.

15.

Subject to the rules of evidence, the Division encourages the parties to use electronic presentations and technologically generated demonstrative evidence to enhance the trier-of-fact's understanding of the issues before it and to further the convenience and efficiency of the litigation process.

16.

Within thirty (30) days of a Business Case being assigned to the Division, or such shorter or longer time as the Division Judges shall order, the parties shall meet with the Division Judge to whom the Business Case is assigned to discuss the entry of a case management order, including the following issues: (i) the length of the discovery period, the number of fact and expert depositions, and the length of such depositions; (ii) a preliminary deposition schedule; (iii) the identity and number of any motions to dismiss or other preliminary or pre-discovery motions which shall be filed and the time period in which they shall be filed, briefed, and, if appropriate, argued; (iv) the time period after the close of discovery within which post-discovery dispositive motions shall be filed, briefed, and, if appropriate, argued; (v) the need for any alternative form of dispute resolution, specifically including mediation; (vi) an estimate of the volume of documents and electronic information likely to be the subject of discovery from the parties and non-parties, and whether there are means by which to render document discovery more manageable and less expensive; (vii) modifications to the rules under the Civil Practice Act or the Uniform Superior or State Court Rules as may be applicable to a particular case; and (viii) such other matters as the Division Judge may assign to the parties for their consideration. Prior to the meeting with the Division Judge, lead counsel for each party shall meet and confer to discuss subparts (i) through (viii) of this paragraph. At the initial meeting with the Division Judge, the parties shall submit a proposed case management order to the Division Judge for consideration.

17.

In an effort to reduce the length of discovery and quickly resolve any discovery disputes, the Division Judges shall be available to the parties to resolve disputes that arise during the course of discovery.

18.

In addition to telephone conferencing pursuant to Rule 9.1 of the Uniform Superior and State Court Rules, by mutual agreement between the parties and the Division Judges, counsel may arrange for any hearing or other conference to be conducted by video- conference, subject to the same rules of procedure and decorum as if the hearing or conference were held in open court. In addition to charging the parties for other costs associated with Business Cases pending in the Division, the Clerk may charge the parties a fee for such video-conferencing or may include the costs of such video-conferencing in any standard fee charged to parties participating in Business Cases pending in the Division.

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA
Clerk's Office, Atlanta

I hereby certify that the above is a true extract from
the minutes of the Supreme Court of Georgia
witness my signature and the seal of said court hereto
affixed the day and year last above written.

 Clerk