

NEWS RELEASE

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Jury convicts woman of DWI; others plead guilty

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Misdemeanor Appeals Team recently tried one defendant in Superior Court while other defendants entered guilty pleas. The proceedings were held May 20-24, 2019, in courtrooms 5170 and 5130 before The Honorable Karen Eady-Williams and The Honorable Forrest D. Bridges, Superior Court Judges.

The Misdemeanor Appeals Team prosecutes cases in which the defendant was convicted in District Court, and then appeals his or her conviction to Superior Court for a jury trial as allowed under North Carolina law.

Kelsey Seretis, 27, was tried for driving while impaired. A jury returned a verdict of *guilty*. Judge Eady-Williams sentenced Seretis to 30 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail; that sentence was suspended pending her successful completion of 12 months of unsupervised probation.

Kimberly Parris, 35, filed a pretrial motion to suppress evidence seized or obtained by law enforcement, alleging violations of her legal rights. Judge Bridges, who heard arguments from the defense and an Assistant District Attorney, denied the motion. Parris then pled guilty to driving while impaired. Judge Bridges sentenced Parris to 60 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail; that sentence was suspended pending her successful completion of 12 months of unsupervised probation.

Devon Berry, 21, pled guilty to resisting a public officer. Judge Bridges sentenced Berry to 60 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 9 months of unsupervised probation.

Vasilios Kroustalis, 44, filed a pretrial motion to suppress evidence seized or obtained by law enforcement, alleging violations of his legal rights. Judge Eady-Williams, who heard arguments from the defense and an Assistant District Attorney, denied the motion. Kroustalis then pled guilty to driving while impaired. Judge Eady-Williams sentenced Kroustalis to 45 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 12 months of unsupervised probation.

John Smith, 41, pled guilty to driving while impaired. Judge Eady-Williams sentenced Smith to 30 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 12 months of unsupervised probation.

Note: Misdemeanors and infractions are originally prosecuted in district court in North Carolina. In criminal district court, a judge determines guilt, not a jury; this is commonly referred to as a “bench trial.” However, defendants have a right to appeal a conviction from the district court to the superior court for a trial de novo. The new trial in superior court must be a jury trial, not a bench trial. In a de novo trial, the jury cannot be informed that a district court judge previously found the defendant guilty; further, a record of any evidence, including testimony, from district court may not be introduced. While the DA’s Office prosecutes nearly 225,000 misdemeanors and infractions each year in district court in Mecklenburg County, each defendant is entitled to exercise his/her right to appeal to the superior court. When a misdemeanor or infraction occupies the limited time available in our superior courtrooms, it the intent of the DA’s Office to keep the public informed of the results through news releases like this one. Due to the volume of misdemeanors and infractions prosecuted in district court each day, reports like this are not possible for all of those cases.

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