District Attorney's Office
State of North Carolina
26th Prosecutorial District
Mecklenburg County

NEWS RELEASE

Spencer B. Merriweather III
District Attorney

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Jury finds massage therapist guilty of sexual battery

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – In a trial led by the Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Special Victims Team, a jury has convicted a local massage therapist of inappropriately touching a woman during a massage. A defendant in an unrelated case entered a guilty plea before his case was called for trial. The proceedings were held May 6-16, 2019, before The Honorable George C. Bell and The Honorable Karen Eady-Williams, Superior Court Judges.

Eric Pierre Stewart, 30, was tried for 1) second-degree forcible sex offense and 2) sexual battery. The jury found him *guilty* of sexual battery and *not guilty* of the sex offense. Judge Bell sentenced Stewart to 60 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 24 months of supervised probation. As a condition of his probation, Stewart must serve 15 days in jail. Stewart must also register as a sex offender for 30 years and surrender his massage therapy license. In January 2016, the victim went to a Charlotte massage business. As Stewart performed the massage, he inappropriately touched the victim. At trial, three additional women testified before the jury about experiences of inappropriate touching by Stewart during massages, establishing Stewart's pattern of abusive behavior toward women.

Robert Franklin, 43, pled guilty to felony breaking or entering. Judge Eady-Williams sentenced Franklin to 10-21 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 36 months of supervised probation. As a condition of his probation, Franklin must serve 206 days in custody.

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