

NEWS RELEASE

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Drug offender pleads guilty mid-trial; 5 others also convicted

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Drug Team convicted six defendants during a trial session held the week of November 27, 2017. One defendant pled guilty as charged after witnesses testified at his trial. Three defendants pled guilty after a judge denied their pretrial motions, and another two defendants pled guilty before their cases were called for trial. The proceedings were held before The Honorable Daniel A. Kuehnert and The Honorable W. Erwin Spainhour, Superior Court Judges.

Michael Steele, 31, was tried for 1) possession with the intent to sell or deliver cocaine, 2) felony maintaining a dwelling for the purpose of keeping or selling cocaine, 3) possession of drug paraphernalia and 4) possession with the intent to sell or deliver cocaine within 1,000 feet of a public park. After the testimony of three witnesses at trial, Steele pled guilty as charged. Judge Spainhour sentenced Steele to 25-42 months in prison. In March 2016, Charlotte-Mecklenburg police executed a search warrant at Steele's residence across the street from a community park. As a result of the search, officers found approximately 11 grams of cocaine and two handguns.

Joel Odom, 39, filed a pretrial motion. Judge Spainhour, who heard arguments from the defense and an Assistant District Attorney, denied Odom's motion. He then pled guilty to 1) three counts of possession of cocaine with the intent to sell or deliver, 2) three counts of sale of cocaine and 3) three counts of delivery of cocaine. Judge Spainhour sentenced Odom to 13-25 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 30 months of supervised probation. As one of the conditions of his probation, Odom must serve 120 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail.

Juan Benjamin, 24, filed a motion to suppress evidence seized or obtained by law enforcement, alleging violations of his legal rights. Judge Kuehnert, who heard arguments from the defense and an Assistant District Attorney, denied Benjamin's motion. He then pled guilty to 1) possession of marijuana with the intent to sell or deliver and 2) possession of a stolen firearm. Judge Kuehnert sentenced Benjamin to 5-15 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 18 months of supervised probation.

Shaun Mackenzie Racer, 24, filed motions to suppress evidence seized or obtained by law enforcement, alleging violations of her legal rights. Judge Kuehnert, who heard arguments from the defense and an Assistant District Attorney, denied Racer's motions. She then pled guilty to 1) possession of cocaine and 2) possession of drug paraphernalia. Judge Kuehnert sentenced Racer to 12 months of supervised probation pursuant to N.C. General Statute § 90-96.

Another defendant filed a motion to suppress evidence seized or obtained by law enforcement, alleging violations of his legal rights. Judge Spainhour granted the defendant's motion. The case remains pending.

Naquon Stewart, 23, pled guilty to 1) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, 2) felony carrying a concealed gun, 3) resisting a public officer and 4) possession of marijuana with the intent to sell or deliver. Judge Spainhour sentenced Stewart to 12-24 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 24 months of supervised probation. As one of the conditions of his probation, Stewart must serve 120 days in the Mecklenburg County Jail.

Tariano Gaddy, 27, pled guilty to 1) possession of marijuana with the intent to sell or deliver. Judge Kuehnert sentenced Gaddy to 4-14 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 18 months of supervised probation.

Note: For more information about the District Attorney's Office, visit www.charmeckda.com. For updates and other information, "like" the DA's Office on Facebook at www.facebook.com/charmeckda and follow us on Twitter: @CharMeckDA.

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