

NEWS RELEASE

Spencer B. Merriweather III
District Attorney

April 28, 2022

DA's prosecution teams maximize trial time to tackle COVID backlog

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's prosecution teams continue to push for all available trial time to address the backlog caused by COVID-19 court closures. At present, two Superior Court courtrooms are available for felony trials each week, and the DA's Office is hopeful that judicial leadership will reopen a third trial courtroom next month.

Over the last month, the DA's Special Victims Team, Homicide Team, Violent Crimes Team, and Felony Crimes Team have all called cases for trial before juries. The following summarizes those trials, as well as guilty pleas that occurred during trial sessions, from March 28 to April 22, 2022:

Special Victims Team

Larry Martin, 65, was tried for two counts of third-degree sexual exploitation of a minor. The jury found him *guilty* as charged. The Honorable Reggie E. McKnight, Superior Court Judge, sentenced Martin to 5-15 months in prison. Upon his release, Martin must register as a sex offender for 30 years. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received a tip from Adobe Inc. that files showing children being sexually abused had been uploaded into an account owned by Martin. A 2018 search of Martin's computer and Adobe records showed that he possessed files showing the sexual exploitation of minors.

Homicide Team

Joel Miranda, 40, was tried for first-degree murder in connection with the death of Pedro Fabricio Diaz Paz. After a nine-day trial, the Honorable W. Robert Bell, Superior Court Judge, declared a mistrial on April 14, 2022, after the jury indicated they were unable to reach a unanimous verdict.

On April 18, 2022, Geoffrey Ford, 48, was called for trial. The following day, before jury selection began, Ford pled guilty to second-degree murder for the killing of Khaled Mohammad Elmerkabaoui. The Honorable Alan Z. Thornburg, Superior Court Judge, sentenced Ford to 300-372 months in prison.

Violent Crimes Team

Michael Dogan, 38, was tried for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The jury found him *not guilty*.

Channing Hill, 37, was tried for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The jury found him *not guilty*.

When he was called for trial, Jessup Thompkins, 23, pled guilty to 1) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, 2) conspiracy to commit robbery with a dangerous weapon, 3) robbery with a dangerous weapon, 4) resisting a public officer, and 5) misdemeanor carrying a concealed gun. The Honorable George C. Bell, Superior Court Judge, sentenced him to 67-93 months in prison.

Bobby Petty, 32, pled guilty to 1) two counts of robbery with a dangerous weapon, 2) common law robbery, 3) assault on a government official, and 4) resisting a public officer. The Honorable Lisa C. Bell, Superior Court Judge, sentenced him to 67-93 months in prison.

Kevin Harrington, 24, pled guilty to 1) common law robbery, 2) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and 3) felonious restraint. The Honorable Kimberly Best, Superior Court Judge, sentenced him to a total of 35-60 months in prison.

Kalil Barrino, 22, pled guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery with a dangerous weapon. The Honorable W. Robert Bell, Superior Court Judge, sentenced him to 30-48 months in prison.

Deron Massey, 31, pled guilty to two counts of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The Honorable George C. Bell, Superior Court Judge, sentenced him to 17-30 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 18 months of supervised probation. Massey also admitted to violating his probation for a prior offense, and as a result, he was sentenced to 6-17 months in prison.

Bryan Franklin, 20, pled guilty to possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The Honorable George C. Bell, Superior Court Judge, sentenced him to 12-24 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 24 months of supervised probation. As a condition of his probation, Franklin must serve 180 days in custody.

Santario Thomas, 29, pled guilty to 1) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and 2) assault on a government official. The Honorable Kimberly Best, Superior Court Judge, sentenced him to 13-25 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 24 months of supervised probation. As a condition of his probation, Thomas must serve 90 days in custody.

Felony Crimes Team

Jamaal Connelly, 40, was tried for 1) felony breaking or entering and 2) larceny after breaking or entering. The jury found him *guilty* as charged. Connelly then admitted his status as a habitual felon. The Honorable N. Hunt Gwyn, Superior Court Judge, sentenced him to 128-166 months in prison. Connelly had 94 prior convictions, which were largely convictions for breaking or entering and larceny across North Carolina.

Jaelon Jones, 25, was tried for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. The jury was unable to reach a unanimous verdict, and as a result, The Honorable Lisa C. Bell, Superior Court Judge, declared a mistrial.

Kevin Ford, 35, pled guilty to three counts of obtaining property by false pretense. The Honorable N. Hunt Gwyn, Superior Court Judge, sentenced Ford to 15-27 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending his successful completion of 36 months of supervised probation.

Note: For more information about the District Attorney's Office, visit www.charmeckda.com. For updates and other information, follow @CharMeckDA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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