

NEWS RELEASE

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III**
District Attorney

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Man pleads guilty to second-degree murder

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – On Friday, after jurors indicated they would be unable to reach a unanimous verdict, Derek Johnson Jr. pled guilty to second-degree murder for the 2020 shooting death of 28-year-old Marcus Withers. The trial, which began on February 23, 2026, and concluded with Friday's plea, was held in courtroom 5370 before the Honorable Karen Eady-Williams, Superior Court Judge. The District Attorney's Homicide Team prosecuted the case.

Johnson, 22, was tried for first-degree murder. On Friday afternoon, the jurors informed the court that they had been unable to reach a verdict. Judge Eady-Williams instructed them to continue deliberating. It was then that Johnson decided to plead guilty to second-degree murder. Judge Eady-Williams sentenced him to 157-201 months in prison.

Around 9:40 p.m. on June 10, 2020, officers were called to the home of Marcus Withers where he was found unresponsive in the backyard with multiple gunshot wounds, including one to his head. Withers was transported to the hospital where he was pronounced deceased. A family member of Withers who was inside the house at the time of the shooting reported hearing several gunshots and seeing one suspect run from the scene. Another witness saw Johnson running in the neighborhood shortly after the shooting. Johnson was detained a few hours later after reportedly arguing with his brother over a firearm. During the investigation, officers with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department located a rifle, along with other personal items belonging to Withers, inside a shed in the backyard near where his body was found. Witnesses reported that Withers and Johnson recently had a dispute over ownership of that rifle. Photos on Johnson's phone showed that he was in possession of the same rifle several weeks before Withers was shot.

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