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General Presentation and Reports

Athens-Clark County Grand Jury

Clerk Superior Court, County, Ga.

Bk 02024 Pg 4283-4286

July Term 2024

Penalty:

On the 8th day of July, 2024, the Honorable Judge Eric Norris selected a jury of 25 people including two alternates to the Grand Jury. Judge Eric Norris then administered the oath and charged them with their responsibilities.

The jurors then selected Nancy C. Cobb as Foreperson, Tyler Chase Graham Mathis as Assistant Foreperson, Courtney Todd Middlebrooks as Secretary, and Julie Davidson King as Assistant Secretary.

The remaining jurors were Tabitha Marie Barrow, Korey Dante Bass, Tracy Lanier Carithers, Glen Andrew Christensen, Roger Johnson, Kenzi Heaven Laney, Jennifer Erin Lazo, Peyton John Ovington, Sandra J. Pyle, Cason Alexander Rogers, Steven H. Ruechel, Eva Jacqueline Sell, James Henry Shaw, Regina Rae Smith, Marcus Thomas Stroud, Sr., Gregory Walker, Luke Arthur Wallace, Stephanie K. Walton, Carlito Quidon Watson, Rusty Stephen Williams, and Angela Wright.

Criminal Functions

The Grand Jury was presented with 155 cases. Of the cases, 151 were True Bills, 3 were No Bills, and 1 was returned as a Split Bill. This activity took place July 9th, July 16th, August 6th, August 13th, August 20th, August 27th, September 3rd, September 10th, September 17th, September 24th, October 1st, and October 8th of 2024.

On July 23rd and July 30th, the Grand Jury was unable to meet due to the closure of the courthouse for bedbug treatment.

Civil Functions

The Grand Jury did not perform any civil functions during its term.

General Observations

While we understand the general difficulties municipalities face in order to build and maintain their properties, the Clarke County Courthouse appeared to be in significant need of expenditures to simply bring it up to a functional level. Notwithstanding the unanticipated disruption the bedbug infestation caused, the Courthouse often did not lend itself to ease of use during our service. During the oppressive heat that Georgia experiences, the air conditioning stopped functioning at the end of August. Furthermore, there was only one functioning elevator. For those intrepid enough to attempt (or too infirm to navigate the stairs), it necessitated disembarking for moments when inmates were being transported.

With respect to the criminal process in and of itself, we would like to note that there appeared to be a shocking number of cases with offense dates between 2021 and 2023. We were surprised to hear only a few cases from 2024. Obviously COVID created a large backlog in proceedings, but we would like to note that it seemed law enforcement officers struggled to recall details without heavily relying on their notes. It is concerning that it is taking such a significant amount of time to bring these cases even to the level of indictment, much less the amount of time it takes to bring a case to its closure after indictment.

While the jury knows how understaffed the current office of the District Attorney is, we want to commend the office of the District Attorney and the officers and witnesses and thank them for their efforts to maintain the law in Athens Clarke County. This jury was able to make quick informed decisions thanks to prepared and present witnesses from the GBI, ACCPD, Attorney General's Office and office of the District Attorney.

Lastly, in order to streamline the indictment presentation process, it would be helpful if time was spent prior to presentation ensuring all details of an indictment were correct and all witnesses were scheduled appropriately. There were numerous instances where an offense date or other element of a charge was only noticed upon reading the indictment to the Grand Jury, necessitating a revision in the moment. Other times the Grand Jury finished the morning session much earlier than the afternoon session causing us to have to break for several hours and come back after lunch. One time we were even told to come back after lunch, but upon returning learned that the officer was not available. Our group would have preferred to simply work through the lunch hour, if practicable, so possibly offering a future Grand Jury the option at the beginning of the term would help alleviate this issue. Overall, it seemed a little thoughtful planning, proofreading, and witness coordination could have prevented a good bit of wasted time.

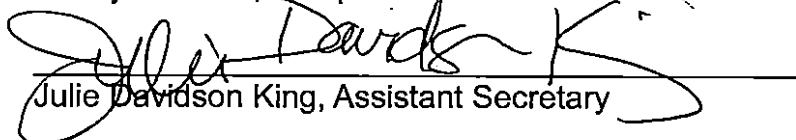
Closing Remarks & Acknowledgements

The Grand Jury would like to thank the courthouse staff, Bailiff Jackie Lunsford, ADA Charles Rettiger, and the Athens-Clarke County police officers for making this experience extremely rewarding.

Furthermore, while some of us had previously served on a jury, none of us had served on a Grand Jury. This is a unique process that most citizens do not see or give much thought to. We all learned a great deal about this overlooked, but important, legal process as well as Athens-Clarke County itself.



Nancy C. Cobb, Foreperson



Julie Davidson King, Assistant Secretary

CLARKE COUNTY GRAND JURY 3RD QUARTER 2024

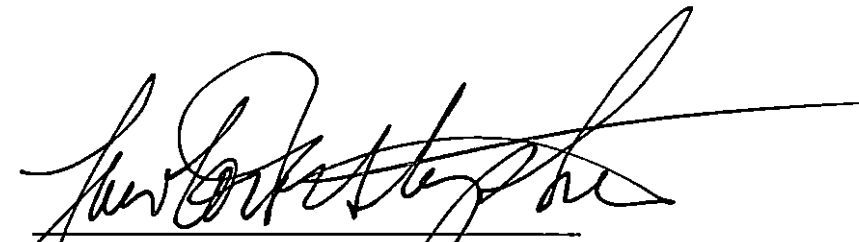
Juror's Name	Juror's Signature
Nancy C. Cobb, Foreperson	Nancy C Cobb
Tyler Chase Graham Mathis, Assistant Foreperson	Tyler Chase Graham Mathis
Courtney Todd Middlebrooks, Secretary	
Julie Davidson King, Assistant Secretary	Julie Davidson King
Tabitha Marie Barrow	Tabitha Marie Barrow
Korey Dante Bass	
Tracy Lanier Carithers	Tracy Carithers
Glen Andrew Christensen	Glen Andrew Christensen
Roger Johnson	Roger Johnson
Kenzi Heaven Laney	Kenzi Heaven Laney
Jennifer Erin Lazo	Jennifer Erin Lazo
Peyton John Ovington	Peyton Ovington
Sandra J. Pyle	Sandra J Pyle
Cason Alexander Rogers	
Steven H. Ruechel	Steven H Ruechel
Eva Jacqueline Sell	Eva Jacqueline Sell
James Henry Shaw	James Henry Shaw
Regina Rae Smith	Regina Rae Smith
Marcus Thomas Stroud, Sr.	Marcus T. Stroud Sr
Gregory Walker	Gregory Walker
Luke Arthur Wallace	Luke A Wallace
Stephanie K. Walton	Stephanie Walton
Carlito Quidon Watson	Carlito Watson
Rusty Stephen Williams	Rusty Stephen Williams
Angela Wright	Angela Wright

GEORGIA

ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY

It is ordered that the foregoing presentments of the Grand Jury empanelled for the 2024 July Term of the Superior Court of Athens-Clarke County be entered on the minutes of the Court and published at the expense of the County in the official organ of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. Exhibits are not to be published, but shall be available for inspection and reproduction in the Office of Clerk of Superior Court Athens-Clarke County,

This 8th day of October, 2024.



**Lawton E. Stephens, Judge
Superior Court Athens-Clarke County
Western Judicial Circuit**

Filed in Open Court this 8th day of October, 2024.



Elisa Zarate, Clerk of Superior Court