

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, IN AND FOR PINELLAS COUNTY  
CASE NUMBER CRC21-01099CFANO  
CRC21-01513CFANO

STATE OF FLORIDA,  
Plaintiff,  
vs.  
CORNELIUS T. WHITFIELD,  
Defendant.

PROCEEDINGS: PRETRIAL HEARING

BEFORE: The Honorable Philip J. Federico  
Circuit Court Judge

DATE: August 20, 2024

PLACE: Courtroom 7  
Pinellas County Justice Center  
14250 - 49th Street North  
rClearwater, Florida 33762

REPORTER: Karen E. Roman  
Registered Professional Reporter

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Administrative Office of the Courts  
Court Reporting Department  
Pinellas County Justice Center  
14250 - 49th Street North  
Clearwater, Florida 33762  
Telephone: (727) 453-7233  
Fax: (727) 453-7488

APPEARANCES

**APPEARING ON BEHALF OF  
THE STATE OF FLORIDA:**

THEODORA TAKTIKOS-DANZIG, ESQUIRE  
Office of Bernie McCabe, State Attorney  
Sixth Judicial Circuit, Pinellas County  
14250 - 49th Street North  
Clearwater, Florida 33762

**APPEARING ON BEHALF OF  
THE DEFENDANT CORNELIUS T. WHITFIELD:**

JULIA B. SEIFER-SMITH, ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER  
JESSICA MANUELE, ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER  
MARGARET S. RUSSELL, ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER  
Office of the Public Defender  
14250 49th Street North  
Clearwater, Florida 33762

\* \* \*



1 think it's a combination.

2 THE COURT: You going sooner or going later  
3 than March?

4 MS. MANUELE: We were looking at April. And  
5 your Honor's back March 31st; is that right?

6 THE COURT: Yes, that Monday.

7 MS. MANUELE: We had looked at April 7th, if  
8 that works.

9 THE COURT: I do not have anything on  
10 April 7th.

11 State, how is that for you and Mr. Koskinas?

12 MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: That's fine, your Honor.

13 THE COURT: All right. How close are you to  
14 being ready?

15 While we're here, we might as well talk about  
16 it.

17 MS. MANUELE: As far as guilt in this case  
18 goes, your Honor, we -- there are some depositions that  
19 still need to be completed. But I don't think  
20 there are any -- well, and I -- I could foresee a  
21 potential --

22 THE COURT: There is only guilt in this case,  
23 right?

24 MS. MANUELE: Yes, your Honor. As far as -- I  
25 could see a potential -- us needing to file one

1           evidentiary motion that I can think of as far as  
2           some suggestibility -- (inaudible) -- that was done  
3           in the case.

4           THE COURT:   Photo pack --

5           MS. MANUELE:   Just a single photo.

6           THE COURT:   Single photo?

7           MS. MANUELE:   Yes.

8           THE COURT:   Hmm.   Hmm.

9           MS. MANUELE:   Yeah.   So -- I think that is an  
10          issue that --

11                       (SIMULTANEOUS TALKING)

12          THE COURT:   -- (inaudible) --

13          MS. MANUELE:   What's that?

14          THE COURT:   At least you got the order.

15          MS. MANUELE:   Right.   Right.

16          THE COURT:   -- (inaudible) -- oh, is that it?  
17          Imagine that -- at a few four, five, six, whatever.

18                 All right.   So we're going to set the trial on  
19          21-01099 for 4/7/24 instead of pretrial on the  
20          other murder cases for that same day.

21                 Then there's still no discussion, or we  
22          haven't come to a -- (inaudible) -- about whether  
23          there's any resolution short of trial?

24                 MS. MANUELE:   We -no, your Honor.   We're not  
25          in any position to have a resolution short of trial

1 at this point.

2 We are in works of putting together some  
3 mitigation in hopes that we -- the State would  
4 waive the death penalty in which case the cases  
5 would obviously be able to proceed to trial  
6 faster -- or both of them much faster.

7 (SIMULTANEOUS TALKING)

8 THE COURT: What's your --

9 MS. MANUELE: But at this point, we're  
10 not -- are not sending any offers.

11 THE COURT: You're not offering life in  
12 exchange for a waiver, I guess. So we're not  
13 there. We're not at that place?

14 MS. MANUELE: No, your Honor.

15 THE COURT: Do we anticipate getting to that  
16 point?

17 MS. MANUELE: I'm unclear, your Honor.

18 THE COURT: I guess the question will be if he  
19 did it -- (inaudible) -- that place where you will  
20 be rebuffed in that request. Then you'd have to  
21 have a conversation with the [REDACTED] juror about all  
22 of that, huh?

23 MS. MANUELE: Right.

24 THE COURT: We don't get to that conversation  
25 'til the precursor to that discussion happens.

1 Just like the precursor to the ultimate trial would  
2 have to happen. We got lots of precursors in this  
3 whole thing.

4 MS. MANUELE: There are lots of --

5 (SIMULTANEOUS TALKING)

6 THE COURT: -- precursor.

7 I mean, that's a couple years more of work,  
8 right?

9 MS. MANUELE: Oh, absolutely. And we just  
10 lost our mitigation specialist on the case. We  
11 learned after court last week.

12 THE COURT: What happened?

13 MS. MANUELE: We don't have a mitigation  
14 specialist on the case, so that is going to  
15 certainly be adding --

16 (SIMULTANEOUS TALKING)

17 THE COURT: -- (inaudible) -- run out the  
18 clock -- (inaudible) --

19 MS. MANUELE: Is that good news?

20 THE COURT: I don't know. You may be talking  
21 three years down the road, right?

22 MS. MANUELE: Right. So that is certainly  
23 some information we're going to, you know, provide  
24 to the State in addition to the mitigation in hopes  
25 of maybe getting a waiver of the death penalty on

1           that case, but --

2           THE COURT:   You got an offer of waiver, right?

3           MS. MANUELE:   A waiver, not an offer asking  
4           them to waive the death penalty --

5           THE COURT:   Oh.

6           MS. MANUELE:   -- for the purposes of -- you  
7           know, the next of kin on the death penalty case  
8           don't want death.

9           THE COURT:   They're not doing that  
10          without -- they're not -- that was like last week's  
11          thing where I had to have -- they sent it back on  
12          reversal. Was that yours?

13          MS. SEIFER-SMITH:   That was Ms. DeLiberato.  
14          We get confused often, which I very much enjoy  
15          because I find it to be a huge compliment.

16          THE COURT:   The rules kind of harmonized  
17          between PRR and the juvenile the "stach", the  
18          juvenile murder stach, right?

19          MS. MANUELE:   Uh-huh.

20          THE COURT:   Said it's life, but he gets a  
21          hearing after 45. They said don't  
22          harmonize -- state my PRR, right?

23                 I said on what planet are we talking about?

24                 So they sent it back. And then we had the  
25                 hearing, and said they, Hey, guess what? We're not



1           waiving PRR?

2           I'm like they couldn't have figured that out.  
3           And somewhere one of the judges, he's lived in  
4           Pinellas County for 45 years. He can't figure out  
5           that we're going to waive PRR? They had to send it  
6           back, and I had to screw around with it for 18 more  
7           months, right?

8           MS. MANUELE: I mean, hope springs eternal  
9           that one day they'll say, well, if they're not  
10          supposed to do this, maybe we will agree.

11          MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Maybe justice will be done.

12          THE COURT: All right. So between now and  
13          4/7, that's a Monday. Let me see what she gave me.  
14          Actually, courtroom one is available on that day.  
15          I assume you want to do it in here, right, on a  
16          first degree murder?

17          MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: Yes, your Honor.

18          THE COURT: How long is that going to take, at  
19          least four days? Three or four days? Five days?  
20          What do you think?

21          MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: At least four days.

22          THE COURT: At least four?

23          MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: Uh-huh.

24          THE COURT: So we'll start on Monday so we're  
25          done that week otherwise picking the jury and

1 done -- (inaudible) -- might go into the [REDACTED]  
2 week, will make it twice as hard.

3 MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: Yes.

4 THE COURT: All right. Do we need something  
5 between now and then in order to be ready?

6 MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: I would suggest that.

7 THE COURT: Late Feb early March?

8 MS. MANUELE: I was going to suggest maybe  
9 even like towards the end of fall like late  
10 October, early November to touch base.

11 THE COURT: I mean, that's  
12 just -- that's -- that's -- but, yeah, we can set  
13 it. Any day of the week better than not?

14 MS. MANUELE: Not really.

15 THE COURT: I mean, like, when is Veteran's  
16 Day.

17 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: The [REDACTED].

18 THE COURT: [REDACTED] we're off. How about  
19 that Wednesday, November 13th, how's that for  
20 pretrial?

21 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We might be in trial on  
22 Sales, so he's --

23 MS. MANUELE: Can we go to the [REDACTED] -- oh,  
24 28th?

25 MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: It's the week before

1 Thanksgiving.

2 MS. MANUELE: Can we do 11/20?

3 THE COURT: Yeah, that's good.

4 All right. So we'll do a pretrial on 11/20/24  
5 at 8:30. We got the trial set on the 21 case for  
6 4/7 of '24 [sic] at 8:30 in courtroom one.

7 And that should take care of what we need to  
8 talk about today, right?

9 MS. MANUELE: Yes, your Honor.

10 THE COURT: Yes?

11 MS. TAKTIKOS-DANZIG: Yes.

12 MS. MANUELE: Yes.

13 THE COURT: Sounds good. Thank you, all.  
14 Appreciate it.

15 Sorry to drag you over.

16 **(PROCEEDINGS CONCLUDED)**

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**CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER**

STATE OF FLORIDA     )

COUNTY OF PINELLAS    )

I, Karen E. Roman, Registered Professional Reporter,  
certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically  
report the foregoing proceedings and that the transcript  
is a true record.

DATED this 3rd day of March, 2025.

/s Karen E. Roman  
Karen E. Roman  
Registered Professional Reporter