

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, PINELLAS COUNTY

STATE OF FLORIDA,

Plaintiff,

Case No. 21-08749-CF

21-01513-CF

vs.

21-01099-CF

CORNELIUS TREVON WHITFIELD,

Defendant.

/

PROCEEDINGS: Pretrial Hearing

DATE: July 17, 2026

BEFORE: The Honorable Philip J. Federico
Circuit Court Judge

PLACE: Pinellas County Justice Center
14250 49th Street North
Clearwater, Florida 33762

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A P P E A R A N C E S

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 THE COURT: All right. I got a couple things
3 this morning. Have a seat. Have a seat. Make
4 yourself comfortable. All right. We've got a couple
5 things. We're scheduled for some stuff on our trial
6 for Monday on Mr. Whitfield. Yes?

7 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yes.

8 THE COURT: Anything to discuss? Anything we
9 need to address before we get started?

10 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I would think so.
11 Mr. Whitfield has made a life offer.

12 THE COURT: Okay. That's news. To resolve all
13 the cases?

14 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yes.

15 THE COURT: All right. When were you -- you let
16 Mr. Koskinas know that, I assume?

17 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yes. Yes. I did.

18 THE COURT: How recently has he been aware of
19 that?

20 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: He formally made the offer
21 yesterday.

22 THE COURT: All right. Where does that leave
23 us? Anywhere?

24 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I don't know. I don't have
25 an update.

1 THE COURT: What's that line? Somewhere other
2 than here?

3 MR. KOSKINAS: Yeah. I mean, that's not
4 something that happens in an hour. That's something
5 where we have to sit down with the family and --

6 THE COURT: I know.

7 MR. KOSKINAS: -- it goes through the State
8 Attorney and those kind of things.

9 THE COURT: So where does that put us given the
10 time constraints?

11 MR. KOSKINAS: The bigger issue, Judge, is they
12 filed a *Daubert* -- a motion for a *Daubert* hearing.
13 Right? So --

14 THE COURT: Which, believe it or not, I've
15 actually -- you wouldn't think after all these years
16 but I've actually done a number of research things
17 over that.

18 MR. KOSKINAS: Well --

19 THE COURT: I've actually looked at and I don't
20 see how we're getting around having a *Daubert* hearing
21 to be honest with you.

22 MR. KOSKINAS: Well, that was my problem.
23 That's my concern. So essentially, Judge, a couple
24 of days before the trial, they file a motion for
25 *Daubert*. So now I have to go get and research

1 witnesses to establish that it's not junk science,
2 how many times it's been admitted. I mean, I
3 don't -- I don't know how on earth anybody could
4 genuinely believe that could be accomplished this
5 morning never mind before the trial.

6 So it seems to me like genuinely, if they would
7 have expressed their desire to continue the case, we
8 could have had some real discussions about it. But
9 now they've manufactured a continuance and it's
10 frustrating.

11 And it's not frustrating -- it is frustrating to
12 me but I'm going to tell you who it's frustrating to.
13 Ms. Barnes is sitting here that shows up every single
14 court hearing and expresses concern to the Court that
15 she wants finality and she wants resolution to this
16 case.

17 THE COURT: It --

18 MR. KOSKINAS: So unless the Court is going to
19 deny it on its face, then they've put me in a
20 position where I have two choices. Either I call
21 somebody that's already on the witness list and has a
22 terrible record, which, maybe they were hoping for,
23 or they've manufactured a continuance.

24 THE COURT: I don't know --

25 MR. KOSKINAS: So either way, Judge, I don't

1 think that they sincerely expressed to you a genuine
2 desire to go to trial next week and that's the
3 position that we're in.

4 Now, maybe they thought they'll get more
5 leverage out of a life offer because of it. But,
6 honestly, all that manipulation and gamesmanship does
7 is aggravate the prosecutors and the family members.

8 So if they had a genuine desire for life, that's
9 not the way to go about it.

10 THE COURT: I don't --

11 MR. KOSKINAS: And you correct me if I'm wrong
12 in any assertion that I've just made so far.

13 THE COURT: Well, rather than have back and
14 forth, here's how I would see it. They've been
15 struggling to get Mr. Whitfield to get to that point
16 because they understand the logistics of everything
17 that's going on.

18 Plus, on top of that, they're both leaving the
19 office, which has happened in the interim since we
20 were last together.

21 And so they're in the position that if they try
22 this case now, he gets convicted, they're smart
23 enough, and they're good lawyers, they know that
24 you're not going to consider a life offer after he's
25 already been convicted of first-degree murder.

1 And then he's going to wind up having different
2 lawyers who are put in the position of having to go
3 to trial on a death penalty case when the guy's
4 already been convicted and got life.

5 MR. KOSKINAS: Not to interrupt, Judge, but it's
6 funny that you say that because it's exactly what
7 they did. They called me and said, oh no, we're
8 going to offer you life after the first trial. And I
9 expressed, as you have, the absurdity of that. If we
10 convict on the first trial, how anybody could ever
11 consider life on the second one would be absurd.

12 THE COURT: I don't think the reason is the
13 gamesmanship. I think the reason is they couldn't
14 get their client there. And you --

15 MR. KOSKINAS: I -- Judge, that's between them.
16 So when you say, we, that's not me. I've not been
17 trying to get him to a life offer. We've been trying
18 to get this to trial. So we is not part of that
19 communication or discussion.

20 THE COURT: I know, but you've got to -- why
21 would you -- you've got so many legal issues that are
22 attached to the timing --

23 MR. KOSKINAS: Judge --

24 THE COURT: The timing of the --

25 MR. KOSKINAS: Don't advocate for the life

1 sentence right now. That is inappropriate for the
2 Court to do.

3 THE COURT: No. I'm trying to give you -- I'm
4 trying to point out for the record the complications
5 that we're facing if we go forward with all of that.
6 Right?

7 MR. KOSKINAS: When?

8 THE COURT: What do you mean? If we go forward
9 with all of what we're doing and spent -- how long is
10 it going to take to get the second case to trial if
11 they're gone and they don't have anybody in that
12 office hardly to -- is even death qualified.

13 MR. KOSKINAS: And I understand that, Judge.
14 And if --

15 THE COURT: The practical aspects of this is
16 what we're significantly dealing with.

17 MR. KOSKINAS: Right.

18 THE COURT: No?

19 MR. KOSKINAS: Right. I agree. So why pretend
20 as though you're trying to get the case to trial and
21 then manipulate a continuance at the last second?
22 Why not be sincere with the Court and the State and
23 the next of kin about the -- about the desire?

24 THE COURT: Because they hadn't gotten the guy
25 there yet. I mean, you've been doing this -- we've

1 all been doing this long enough to read between the
2 lines of all that. You can see it as nefariously as
3 you want or you can see it for what it is.

4 MR. KOSKINAS: It's gamesmanship. Plain and
5 simple. That's all it is.

6 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Your Honor, may I respond?

7 MR. KOSKINAS: They have had the ballistics for
8 years.

9 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We have not had the
10 ballistics for years because the State Attorney's
11 Office was incapable of getting the full file to us.

12 THE COURT: What I really didn't want to get
13 this to devolve into is to this back-and-forth peeing
14 contest between everybody about what happened. The
15 question is -- the issue is we are where we are.
16 There is a -- I mean, the question is where do we go
17 from here and what do we do from now? Right?

18 I mean, you can be as pissed as you want. I get
19 it. Maybe I would be if I was sitting in that chair.
20 I don't know. I might. I might have had a different
21 perspective 32 years ago sitting in that chair, which
22 I used to do before I'd been up here, but my
23 perspective has changed. Right? I mean, I had no
24 view back then. I'm not saying you're the same, but
25 back then, I had no idea what the Defense's

1 perspective would be. Over the last 32 years, I've
2 learned in a lot of situations, sometimes I -- I get
3 where they're coming from. And sometimes I
4 understand the difficulties that they have.

5 My job now is to craft the best result for
6 everybody involved in the system understanding the
7 different interests that each party has. I mean, you
8 want to skip the *Daubert* hearing, we can, but, you
9 know, then we're going to a couple more years of work
10 for nothing. Right? You know that. You're --

11 MR. KOSKINAS: I didn't put you in that
12 position. I agree. But I didn't put us in this
13 position.

14 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Well, the State actually did
15 because on Monday they filed a motion to compel
16 fingerprints on a case that is 5 1/2 years old.

17 THE COURT: We could go back and forth this way
18 all we wanted. I'm not -- I'm not aspiring to place
19 guilt anywhere. This is --

20 (Attorney/attorney conversation).

21 THE COURT: It's a difficult case. There's a
22 lot of complications with it. There's a lot of
23 difficulties. I mean, I worry about who's going to
24 get on the case after this? Are they going to be up
25 to the task and then we're going to be here, what,

1 two years from now? Who the hell knows if I'm even
2 going to be here if I'm not retired two years from
3 now?

4 Who -- who doesn't know that this isn't going to
5 send me running out the door, not because of them but
6 once they're retired and somebody else comes on and I
7 can't get this thing to trial, and it's what, seven
8 or eight years old? Then what? I retire and then
9 you're going to have somebody else in here that knows
10 nothing about to the case to try to get it to
11 resolution? I mean, the history is what the history
12 is. Right?

13 MR. KOSKINAS: Right.

14 THE COURT: So the question is what do we do
15 now? Do we -- do we -- your perceived feeling or
16 animosity about how we've gotten here is going to
17 preclude us from having an honest conversation about
18 what the best result is? I'm hoping -- I -- I
19 believe that you're a smarter or better lawyer than
20 that.

21 MR. KOSKINAS: Judge, again, don't advocate for
22 the life sentence because that's beyond my control.
23 Okay? We're going to talk to the State Attorney.
24 We're going to talk to the family. But that's a
25 process. So please don't waste your time trying to

1 advocate for the Defense with me.

2 THE COURT: Ultimately, I'm going to be the one
3 that's in the box. Right?

4 MR. KOSKINAS: Right.

5 THE COURT: You would agree with that.

6 MR. KOSKINAS: I absolutely do.

7 THE COURT: You get a conviction on a
8 first-degree murder, I've -- I've heard what the
9 aggravation of mitigation is. Right? Depending,
10 given all the litigation around what the voting
11 process is and we'll have to litigate all that out.
12 Right?

13 MR. KOSKINAS: Yeah. And that's part of the
14 aggravation but yes.

15 THE COURT: Right?

16 MR. KOSKINAS: Yes.

17 THE COURT: Ultimately I'm going to have to call
18 what the vote is at some point and then based on the
19 vote make a call on what the answer is unless we go
20 through all of this and get a life rack. Right?

21 MR. KOSKINAS: True.

22 THE COURT: So literally I'm the one -- I'm the
23 one going to be in the box on a couple different
24 issues. Right? Is that fair?

25 MR. KOSKINAS: Sure.

1 THE COURT: So the first thing they teach you at
2 baby judge's college is don't get in the box unless
3 you absolutely have to. Right?

4 So my advocating is for not having to make a
5 bunch of new law between the Florida and the U.S.
6 Supreme Court long after I'm gone and probably long
7 after I'm dead as far as that's concerned so -- since
8 I'm turning 70 in a couple months.

9 There's a simple way to solve all of that with
10 no appeals and it's done. I -- I'm not advocating
11 because I think that's what the result should be.
12 I'm advocating or I'm saying what I think the
13 practicalities are.

14 So you tell me what you want to do. I'm open to
15 suggestion.

16 MR. KOSKINAS: I understand the Court's view and
17 position.

18 THE COURT: I mean, if you think it's misguided,
19 tell me. I mean, I'm not above listening -- you know
20 --

21 MR. KOSKINAS: Judge --

22 THE COURT: The one thing I think I've prided
23 myself on is if people want to say something or
24 criticize, I'll listen. I don't hold it against
25 people if they disagree. Plenty of people have

1 disagreed. I've made plenty of mistakes in the last
2 32 years. I'm not above acknowledging that. If you
3 tell me what you think I should change about what I'm
4 advocating for, I'll listen.

5 MR. KOSKINAS: Well --

6 THE COURT: I'm not one of those guys that says
7 I'm right about everything, don't tell me anything.

8 MR. KOSKINAS: Yeah. No, Judge, but I think
9 that is -- like I said, it's not my call. And he
10 killed four people. So I can see the flip side of
11 the coin for somebody that's seeking death.

12 THE COURT: I can, too.

13 MR. KOSKINAS: Okay.

14 THE COURT: That's why I'm acknowledging that
15 I'm probably going to be in the box on that one.
16 Right? If we litigate it. I don't think I'm telling
17 anybody anything they haven't figured out already.

18 MR. KOSKINAS: Right. So that's where we are,
19 Judge. Unless you're going to deny on its face their
20 last minute motion for *Daubert* --

21 THE COURT: You tell me that's what you want me
22 to do.

23 MR. KOSKINAS: No.

24 THE COURT: You're --

25 MR. KOSKINAS: I don't think --

1 THE COURT: You're smarter -- I --

2 MR. KOSKINAS: -- the Court can do that.

3 THE COURT: Right.

4 MR. KOSKINAS: I don't think you can do that and
5 that's why I say I think they genuinely are involved
6 in gamesmanship and at the last second manipulated a
7 continuance.

8 THE COURT: I don't -- well, we're going to have
9 to --

10 MR. KOSKINAS: So --

11 THE COURT: We're going to have to agree to
12 disagree about that.

13 MR. KOSKINAS: That's fine. That's fine.

14 THE COURT: Has -- has their client ever shown
15 any interest in -- in making an offer before this
16 time?

17 MR. KOSKINAS: We're talking about two different
18 things and I don't think they're related. You're
19 telling me that they filed that motion because they
20 were trying to get the defendant to a life sentence?
21 I don't think that's related, Judge.

22 So I know you want to bring that back in but --
23 but I don't think they're related. So that's where
24 we are, Judge, and I think, yes, I think they've
25 manufactured a continuance and I think you're going

1 to be required to reset a *Daubert* hearing and the
2 question is whether you do it while they're here or
3 whether they're out the door.

4 THE COURT: While --

5 MR. KOSKINAS: And see if the next attorney
6 adopts that.

7 THE COURT: When are you going to be ready for a
8 *Daubert* hearing if we said we were going to try and
9 do it?

10 MR. KOSKINAS: So --

11 THE COURT: We're on -- we're on the 17th.
12 You're out on the 31st. Right?

13 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Correct.

14 MR. KOSKINAS: Well, I've got to now go, you
15 know, if I want to establish a real record, I've got
16 to go find witnesses to establish that number one,
17 it's not junk science. Number two, that it's been
18 admitted and -- and experts that had shown it -- how
19 many times it's been admitted in court. Number
20 three, do the research to show it. We all know it's
21 nonsense and it's an accepted science. We all know
22 that.

23 THE COURT: Based on my --

24 MR. KOSKINAS: But I've got to establish a
25 record to show that. And I don't currently have the

1 witnesses on the witness list to do that. And they
2 know that.

3 THE COURT: Based on my research, it's not
4 unanimous. There are a number of states that
5 don't -- you know, everything scientific has been
6 rechallenged since *Daubert*. GSR got thrown out.
7 There's a bunch of things that are still being
8 challenged and litigated. It's not, I mean, you
9 know, GSR, everybody thought that was great science
10 20 years ago. Right?

11 That's long since been kicked out. I mean,
12 there are some states that have said tool and die is
13 not something that's science, it's opinion-related
14 and it shouldn't be. Right? That's not the --
15 that's the minority view, not the majority view, but
16 there are states that have said that.

17 So I don't know how you get by -- you can't get
18 by a *Daubert* hearing on that.

19 MR. KOSKINAS: I don't think you can deny it on
20 its face.

21 THE COURT: Right. So it doesn't sound like you
22 can be ready between now and the 31st. I'm
23 not -- I'm not putting you -- I'm not squeezing you
24 to say you must do this by the 31st given the
25 situation you find yourself in.

1 MR. KOSKINAS: I can't give you an answer
2 because I've got to -- I have to now go find
3 witnesses that can establish a record that shows
4 that. So I can't give you an answer. They just
5 filed this on me --

6 THE COURT: So shouldn't the --

7 MR. KOSKINAS: Monday afternoon.

8 THE COURT: Shouldn't the first thing be to talk
9 to Bartlett about the offer that's on the table?

10 MR. KOSKINAS: Yes.

11 THE COURT: Okay. So how much time do you need
12 for that and when should we reconvene to say yay or
13 nay on that?

14 MR. KOSKINAS: I don't know. A couple of weeks,
15 maybe?

16 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yeah.

17 THE COURT: All right. Well, today is
18 the -- today's the 17th. A couple weeks when? I'd
19 prefer not that Friday the 31st because I'm doing
20 mental health court. I don't really want to have
21 this conversation when I'm attempting to do mental
22 health court.

23 MR. KOSKINAS: I understand.

24 THE COURT: They would not necessarily go
25 together as a match set.

1 MR. KOSKINAS: Yeah. How about, well -- I'm in
2 a conference the 27th through the 29th. I could do
3 it on the 30th potentially.

4 THE COURT: Does that work?

5 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I'm -- I'm sorry. I missed
6 the date.

7 THE COURT: I guess --

8 MR. KOSKINAS: 30th.

9 THE COURT: -- the answer would be their --
10 you're going to give them the answer on the plea on
11 the 30th? Is that the plan?

12 MR. KOSKINAS: Yeah. And I'll see if I can list
13 witnesses by that time. Well, I'll -- I'll hold that
14 because I don't know if the next attorneys are going
15 to adopt that motion.

16 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Your Honor --

17 MR. KOSKINAS: But if they're the attorneys
18 regarding a plea and it gets to that point, they need
19 to be here so the 30th is really the only time I
20 could do that.

21 THE COURT: I'm happy to listen. Hopefully,
22 we're not -- we don't need to inflame anything beyond
23 what it is at this point.

24 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Your Honor, just a couple of
25 things.

1 THE COURT: Okay.

2 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We have been steadily working
3 to attempt to get Mr. Whitfield to a place where he
4 would make a life offer --

5 THE COURT: I think I recognized that and
6 understood that.

7 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: -- for a very, very long
8 time. Your Honor has been doing this also much
9 longer than I have, and you recognize that sometimes
10 it is at the very last do or die moment that those
11 types of offers are made and that is what happened in
12 this case.

13 This is not a question of gamesmanship. This is
14 not a question of manipulation. I filed the motions
15 that are required of me as his attorney to file.
16 Based on the deposition that was taken of the witness
17 that was listed -- or not listed but that was
18 mentioned in the motion to roll fingerprints on
19 Monday by the State Attorney's Office, I believe that
20 we have a *Daubert* motion now with respect to
21 fingerprints based on the things that she said
22 yesterday at 3:00 PM.

23 This is not a question of Defense delay tactics.
24 This is a question of arriving at the right decision
25 for all parties in this case based on all of our

1 work, based on our understandings of the positions of
2 the next of kin. In both of the cases, they want it
3 to end. They want it to be over. The life plea gets
4 us all there.

5 But if it is not accepted, the one aggravator
6 that has been filed applies to this case. And so I
7 have to do everything in my power to protect my
8 client in the unfortunate possibility of arriving at
9 a sentencing phase on that second case. And so that
10 is what was done here.

11 THE COURT: I -- I have no quarrel with any of
12 that. You -- you got to convince them and Bartlett
13 that that's the case. Right?

14 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I understand that. I know
15 that.

16 THE COURT: I -- I shudder to say more because
17 then I don't -- I don't want somebody to say you're
18 taking their side in this whole scenario. Right?

19 I -- I should be switched (unintelligible) this
20 whole thing. You're going to have to convince him
21 and Bartlett that that's the situation as part of
22 them considering the plea offer that you're making.

23 So my best -- which has never been my
24 forte -- my best situation right now is to shut my
25 mouth which, as you know, is very hard for me to do.

1 So I should stay out of that conversation. I've
2 already expressed to their displeasure somewhat of my
3 thought process is about that. So I'm -- which, it's
4 hard for me to listen but sometimes shutting up is
5 the best thing to do. So that's where I'm at in that
6 scenario.

7 If we can get together -- if you got to file
8 another motion, that's fine. We don't even know now,
9 if we're not able to resolve it by plea, who the next
10 set of lawyers are going to be. Right?

11 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I don't.

12 THE COURT: Well.

13 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I will do my best to expedite
14 that transcript so that I can file what's necessary
15 regarding the fingerprints. But obviously, in the
16 interim, we -- we -- we made that offer with the
17 fervent hope that it would be accepted. That
18 was -- we have every intention of getting this case
19 to the appropriate closure that's necessary for all
20 parties.

21 THE COURT: And I appreciate you saying that
22 you're probably going to -- so they know that you're
23 probably going to file a *Daubert* on the fingerprints.
24 And my guess is, and again, I don't want to speak for
25 anybody, but my guess is once they've articulated

1 that, I don't know how the next set of lawyers, if
2 the plea isn't accepted, could go back on that.
3 Because then if they don't file a *Daubert* on the tool
4 and die and they don't file it on the fingerprints,
5 then somebody -- somebody down the road is going to
6 argue that it's a 3.850 not to have filed them after
7 the first set of lawyers thought it was appropriate.
8 Right?

9 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Well, there will certainly be
10 a 3.850 on the first and possibly a 3.851 on the
11 second.

12 THE COURT: Agreed. But maybe --

13 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: But not possibly, absolutely
14 a 3.851 on the second.

15 THE COURT: I understand. We're not -- we're
16 not necessarily talking for now, we're talking for
17 posterity as well. Long after you're gone, I'm gone,
18 I'm, you know, if we don't settle it, we're going to
19 be out of this conversation long after you're -- you
20 won't be gone, I mean, life-wise, but you'll be gone
21 to another job. I will probably be gone entirely by
22 then.

23 So, I mean, seriously. I'm going to be 70 in a
24 couple months. I'm not going to be around. I --
25 I -- yeah, you don't want to hear that story.

1 Anyway.

2 MR. KOSKINAS: You've got at least 30 years,
3 Judge.

4 THE COURT: I doubt it.

5 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: If we're talking about dates,
6 the 30th is not good for the Defense.

7 THE COURT: Is there another -- what -- what
8 would be good between now and the 31st?

9 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: If we could do potentially
10 the 27th?

11 THE COURT: He's gone that week. Aren't you?

12 MR. KOSKINAS: I'm at a conference one the 27th
13 through 29th.

14 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I apologize. I missed that
15 part of the conversation? How about the previous
16 Friday, the 24th?

17 MR. KOSKINAS: Fine.

18 THE COURT: 24?

19 MR. KOSKINAS: But you said you didn't want to
20 do Fridays because you have mental health court.

21 THE COURT: No. I do mental health court on the
22 31st. I don't have it -- any on the 24th.

23 MR. KOSKINAS: Okay.

24 THE COURT: I can do the 24th.

25 MR. KOSKINAS: That's fine.

1 THE COURT: All right. So we're going to do a
2 pretrial to determine a change of plea. You won't
3 have any more knowledge about who's taking over the
4 case by then?

5 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I should hope that I would do
6 (*sic*).

7 THE COURT: You going to file a *Daubert* on the
8 prints by then?

9 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I will do my very best.
10 We'll expedite the transcript.

11 THE COURT: Okay. All right. So we're off the
12 trial calendar on Monday. Correct? I mean, there's
13 nothing else we can do.

14 MR. KOSKINAS: Yeah. I mean, I think
15 that's -- it's -- you charge it to the Defense, but
16 yes.

17 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Your Honor, can we have
18 Mr. Whitfield out at some point when we decide what
19 to do?

20 THE COURT: Yeah. Yeah. We can bring him out.

21 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Thank you.

22 THE COURT: And we'll attempt to summarize.

23 THE BAILIFF: Counsel, are we going to the
24 podium or are we going to the desk?

25 THE COURT: Podium is good.

1 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I can be at the podium.
2 That's fine.

3 THE COURT: I want to -- you don't --

4 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Well, actually, I just need
5 you to give us a second, then, so that --

6 MR. KOSKINAS: So we -- we set it for the 24th,
7 Judge? The 24th?

8 THE COURT: Yeah.

9 MR. KOSKINAS: At what time?

10 THE COURT: Whenever you want. You tell me.
11 8:30 AM? 9:00 AM?

12 MR. KOSKINAS: 9:00 AM.

13 THE COURT: That's fine. You good?

14 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: That's fine. That's fine.

15 THE COURT: All right. Do you want me to
16 confirm -- I would like to confirm he's made that
17 offer on the record.

18 MR. KOSKINAS: Yes, please.

19 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: If I can just have one moment
20 with him to explain what Your Honor is going to do?

21 THE COURT: Sure.

22 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Thank you.

23 THE COURT: Go ahead and let her talk to him in
24 the back. All right.

25 (Unrelated conversations.)

1 THE COURT: All right. We're here on State of
2 Florida versus Cornelius Whitfield. There are a
3 couple cases on the calendar. Today's is 21-01099, a
4 murder in the first degree, attempt murder, and
5 robbery that's set for trial on Monday.

6 This morning ostensibly was going to be to
7 handle any pretrial motions. Also pending is
8 21-01513; three Counts of murder in the first degree,
9 attempt murder in the first degree. Trial set --
10 trial has not been set in that one. And the other
11 case is the intro of contraband on 21-08749.

12 There are some motions that have been filed by
13 the Defense that would require an evidentiary
14 hearing. It doesn't appear that we're going to be
15 able to do that by Monday, so I guess the request or
16 the requirement that we have is we got to have -- if
17 the State's going forward on the death penalty, then
18 we would have to have evidentiary hearings on those
19 motions prior to actually having the trial. So
20 that's going to necessitate a continuance.

21 In the interim, you've spoken to Mr. Whitfield,
22 and he has indicated that he would plead guilty to a
23 life sentence without parole in exchange for the
24 State waiving the death penalty. Is that accurate?

25 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: That is.

1 THE COURT: All right. Mr. Whitfield, is that
2 true?

3 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

4 THE COURT: All right. So that offer is
5 officially on the table from Mr. Whitfield. We've
6 agreed to continue the trial from next week. If we
7 can resolve it by plea, I presume we can do that on
8 the 24th. I'm going to set all three cases for a
9 pretrial on 07/24. If we can't, then as best we can,
10 we're going to have to figure out what scheduling is
11 next.

12 You're indicating not only you filed a motion to
13 exclude the tool and die exam that the testimony from
14 the "expert" on that. Correct?

15 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Yes.

16 THE COURT: All right. And you're also
17 contemplating filing a -- a motion to exclude on --

18 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: The fingerprints as
19 discovered yesterday.

20 THE COURT: The fingerprints. Which has not
21 been filed yet. When -- when -- what happened
22 yesterday?

23 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: There was a deposition of the
24 fingerprint examiner yesterday.

25 THE COURT: Okay. So the depo that was

1 yesterday and so based on you're going to have to
2 expedite a transcript and file those motions. Right?

3 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: That's correct.

4 THE COURT: So all of that is pending. The
5 State has an offer on the table. They need time to
6 talk to the family and Mr. Bartlett, so I think the
7 best thing to do is get together on the 24th.

8 For the record, I should note that Ms. Russell
9 and Ms. Seifer-Smith, who's at the podium, are his
10 defense attorneys. I think there's some -- who was
11 it -- Mr. McGreen was on it. Who's the third now?

12 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: We don't have one.

13 THE COURT: All right. So you're the defense
14 attorneys. You're both leaving the office on the
15 31st. So it's of some import for us to see if we can
16 get this thing brought to a conclusion that everybody
17 can live with. If not, we've got lots of unanswered
18 questions and lots of things to decide about when,
19 how, scheduling, and lots of other issues that are
20 going to need to be addressed. Is there anything I
21 left out in that discussion?

22 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: I don't think so.

23 THE COURT: All right. So let's get together on
24 the 24th at 9:00 AM. We talked about we'll bring
25 Mr. Whitfield over. If we're able to resolve it by

1 plea, we'll do so. If not, we'll try and figure out
2 who the new lawyers are and what additional things
3 need to be addressed in advance of the trial date.

4 Okay? All right. Thank you. Thank you,
5 Mr. Whitfield.

6 MS. SEIFER-SMITH: Thank you.

7 (Proceedings concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA

COUNTY OF PINELLAS

I, Beth Ellenwood, a digital court reporter for the Sixth Judicial Circuit, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and did transcribe the foregoing proceedings and that the transcript is a true and correct record of said proceedings.

DATED this 28th day of July, 2026.

/S Beth Ellenwood
Beth Ellenwood
Digital Court Reporter
Sixth Judicial Circuit