

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

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* * *

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