

FILED
Davidson County
Criminal Court Clerk
JUL 02 2024
BY 
Deputy Clerk

Davidson County Grand Jury
April Term 2024
(April 3, 2024 – June 26, 2024)
Judge Angelita Blackshear Dalton
Criminal Court Division II

Our session of the Grand Jury for Davidson County, after having been sworn in, met on Wednesday and Thursday every week from April 3rd to June 26th with the exception of June 5th and June 6th which was CMA week in Nashville. Our group of jurors were very engaged in the Grand Jury process and we noted that none of us had ever been involved in anything like this before. It was a very informative and educational experience. Our Grand Jury included a diverse group of Davidson County citizens who varied in age, race and gender. We had many lively conversations and debates during our deliberations while we considered each case and returned or declined to return indictments based on the facts presented to us.

--Our panel was given 696 cases in total to deliberate, discuss and decide on. We heard a wide variety of cases.... Including assaults, murders and attempted murders, domestic violence, identity theft, numerous types of drug charges on large and small levels, reckless endangerment, evading arrest, fraud, driving under the Influence, sexual assaults and the worst were crimes against children including a level of neglect that should never happen. There were way too many of these crimes that were committed by repeat offenders who had been in and out of courts and jails like a revolving door. That confirmed to us that there is a great need for some improvements that could and should be made in the system.

Overall, we returned a True Bill on 694 of these cases and 2 No True Bills.

We would like to give great thanks to Mr. Parker Toler, who served as our jury foreperson. Mr. Toler took the time to explain the details which helped us make informed decisions. Mr. Toler is a perfect fit for this position given his knowledge and years of public service to Nashville, and he holds it with tremendous respect. All Grand Juries should have the pleasure of working with him.

We are very appreciative of all the guest speakers who made time to give a quick presentation regarding the work being done with victims. We appreciate General Funk and all of the Staff of the D.A.'s office who provided help in answering any legal questions that came up in our deliberation. We also want to thank Lori Hooberry for her assistance in managing the Grand Jury room.

Guest Speakers that we heard from were:

Glenn Funk, District Attorney General

Detective Steven Jones, M.N.P.D., C.S.I. Unit

Detective Jared Ester, M.N.P.D., Domestic Violence Unit

Detectives John Grubbs and Eaves, Youth Services

Leanna Dugan, MSN, APN, CPNP Our Kids Clinic

Detective Anthony Brooks, M.N.P.D., Alternative Police Strategies

During our session we heard from a variety of individuals involved in law enforcement: Metro Police Dept, TN Highway Patrol, State Park Rangers, Security personnel and other local specialists that had worked on the cases that were presented to us. Each of them presented their cases thoroughly and in a professional manner. From the evidence presented by these folks, we were able to determine if a crime had been committed and if so, we could then decide if the defendant was the likely person who had committed that crime.

Some of the witnesses that we heard from were:

Sgt. Michael Fisher, MNP, Grand Jury Liaison

Detectives Rob Carrigan and David Zoccola, MNP, Crimes against Children

Detectives Nate Meyers and Zachary Maxa MNP, Homicide Unit

Lt. Scott Harding, BNA Police Department

B. Blair, TN Comptroller of Treasury Fraud Investigator

Romario Santiago, Goodlettsville Police Department and several TN Hwy. Patrol Officers, Loss Prevention Officers from Home Depot, Walmart, Target and Kroger.

Sgt. Fisher presented a majority of the cases that we heard. He was always very clear about each case and more than ready and willing to answer any questions we may have had. He was extremely knowledgeable about the laws and how that applied in each situation, plus we appreciated that he added some humor and levity which helped us even more during some of those difficult cases that we heard. He is very good in his position here with the Grand Jury.

It should be noted that all the presenters that we heard from were able to answer our questions or ask someone who could. We appreciate the dedication and thoroughness of all their presentations which guided our decision making.

We learned that Nashville has a Behavioral Care Center to address crimes brought on due to mental health, substance abuse and non-felony charges. This is a short-term residential setting and the offenders work with staff and therapists to devise a treatment plan that helps them with their specific issues, plus provide support for the individual once they have completed their personalized program. This seems like a good facility that we hope is being used by those who need it.

CONCERNS OF THE GRAND JURY

Domestic violence: This is a very serious issue. We had way too many DV events in this session. It is especially concerning that there is such a delay between the time an abuse victim gets an Order of Protection in place and when the abuser is actually charged. A lot can happen in that time and in those cases, we would like to see some harsher penalties for those that defy the OOP. There seemed to be many repeat offenders because a piece of paper means nothing to some of them. There should be a swift penalty since those who have abused their victims multiple times could very well kill them the next time. There should be mandatory jail time for those who violate the OOP.

High Rate of Violent Crime: Aggravated Robberies, Aggravated Assaults, Violent Car Jackings, Murders and Attempted Murders—many of the cases we heard were committed by REPEAT Violent Criminals. It seems that the punishments they receive do not deter them since so many are out on a low bond or were able to plead to a lesser offense and are now walking our Nashville streets. We were amazed to see this happening so often and it must be so very

frustrating for the law enforcement men and women who work so hard to catch the bad guys. They do all they can to present a strong case and the criminal gets out on bond, often very shortly after being arrested. We also noticed that a high number of these offenders are teenagers, 13 to 18 years old. There need to be harsher penalties for these kids so they know that there are indeed consequences for their actions. Higher bonds need to be applied to all these violent offenders, especially those who repeat the crimes over and over.

Sexual Assault cases and Crimes against Children: These cases were upsetting to our jurors and the fact that these types of crimes continue to occur and take years to bring to trial is not acceptable. Some cases we heard were almost two years old... That is unacceptable since often the victim remains vulnerable until the abuser is removed from the home.

Child crimes are reported at the Our Kids facility at the rate of 800-900 cases per year. These children deserve an advocate that can help them now, not someone who may show up every month or so. All victims of sexual assault, children and adults deserve to be protected and their cases dealt with in a timely way.

Drugs are a major concern in Nashville and the cause of a lot of crime: We were made aware of the increase in fentanyl laced drugs leading to an increased number of overdoses. We were presented with a case where a woman died at BNA Nashville airport while waiting for her flight. They were charging the man who supplied those drugs with 2nd degree murder. Nashville needs to continue to charge these dealers with the harshest sentence possible. The dealers know the dangers of what they are selling and they just don't care. These drugs are a source of big money for the dealers who will protect their territories at any cost—often leading to murder and other violent crimes. The addicts created are a major cause of a variety of different crimes, from shoplifting to burglaries and more; often leading to homelessness. Nashville needs to stop plea bargaining with these offenders and the punishments need to be harsh.

GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase Bonds/Jail time for violent offenders—especially repeat offenders and don't let them plead to lesser charges.

Increase the penalties each and every time that an offender violates an order of

protection. The safety of their victims must be a priority.

Stop Plea Bargaining with violent offenders and sex offenders when good evidence exists. Don't make it easy for them to get out and do it again. Those cases deserve to be taken to trial and have a jury decide.

Increase Bonds/Jail time for anyone producing or distributing Schedule I or Schedule II Drugs. Fentanyl is deadly and is being added to so many types of drugs now. Send a strong message to these drug dealers.

This Grand Jury thanks you for the experience that we have shared for the last 13 weeks. We have learned so much and this has opened our eyes to things we were not all aware of. Nashville and Davidson County should be very proud of the exceptional people who work so hard to serve and protect us. Their many hours of work on all these cases are what helps our Judicial System function for the good of everyone.

Our Foreperson was:

PARKER TOLER

Parker Toler

Our Regular Jurors were:

ROBBIE BEADLE

DANIEL BRONICO

CEDRIC CASHEW

VICKI DONOVAN

Vicki Donovan

RONEKA DOUGLAS

FRANKLIN ELLIOTT

Franklin Elliott

ERICA FRAZIER

YOLANDO JACKSON

Yolando Jackson

ORETHA JOHNSON

Oretha Johnson

FRANCINA KING-TRIMBLE

Francina King-Trimble

MARK MARTINEZ

HELEN McCORMICK

JACQUES VEDELIN

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CLARENTIST WEIR

E. RAE ZEHEL

We also had one Alternate Juror who attended almost every day:

SANDY PACE

Sandy Pace