

**Davidson County Grand Jury
October – December 2023 Session
Criminal Court – Division VI
Hon. Cynthia Chappell, Criminal Court Judge**

The Davidson County Grand Jury met in session on Wednesday and Thursday mornings each week beginning the week of October 9 through December 4, 2023 (except for the week of Thanksgiving). This Grand Jury consisted of a diverse mix of interested citizens representative of the broader Nashville community in both age and race.

The Grand Jury heard 507 cases in total. Of those we returned 503 of True Bills, and 4 No True Bills. Many of the cases were DUI, domestic violence, and controlled substances charges. A troubling number of the cases the Defendants possessed firearms, many of whom were prohibited from possessing weapons for a variety of reasons. Several of the cases which will haunt us are the ones involving children – child deaths, abuse and neglect and particularly the shocking number of child sexual exploitation matters. The Grand Jury did its level best to return, or decline to return, indictments which met the facts of the case.

The Grand Jury heard from a variety of individuals with connection to the criminal justice system:

- Hon. Melissa Blackburn, Davidson County General Sessions Court, Mental Health Court
- Davidson County District Attorney, Glenn Funk
- Davidson County Public Defender, Martesha Johnson
- Davidson County Sheriff, Daron Hall
- Detective John Grubbs, Metro Nashville Police Dept. (MNPd) Youth Services
- Ms. Leslie Bridges, DC4 Executive Director
- MNPd CSI Unit
- MNPd Domestic Violence Unit
- Davidson County Probation, DUI Monitoring Unit
- Davidson County Community Corrections

A number of the Grand Jurors took a trip to visit the Metro Nashville Jail and Night Court.

Sgt. Mike Fisher presented most of the cases. He was good at explaining the facts and circumstances of each case in an efficient, yet thorough manner. He obviously spent considerable time in preparation for each day of Grand Jury service. While we understand retail shoplifting is a growing problem in Nashville, we feel that the lay people (such as private loss prevention representatives of major retailers) bring these matters to the Grand Jury would be well served to mimic Sgt. Fisher's preparation and presentation style.

Concerns & Recommendations

A recurring theme throughout the cases involved individuals who were homeless. Severe mental health issues appear to pervade these matters. If individuals are on the streets who cannot care for themselves, or continue to present a threat to others, as we have seen through this session, then efforts should be made to require these persons receive the necessary respite, treatment and medication. Consideration of mandatory incarceration should be given in order for these persons to receive treatment. While the closure of the state hospitals and asylums of yesteryear may have been paved with good intentions, that experiment would appear to have been an utter failure and society at large is paying a high price both in terms of day-to-day safety and quality of life. If Tennessee laws need to be changed, this Grand Jury recommends those changes be made with due haste.

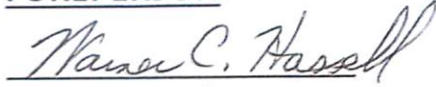
The Grand Jury also observed that many of the individuals appearing before it had been there before, often many, many times for prior crimes. We recommend that the District Attorney announce and follow a prosecutorial policy that certain crimes, such as firearm offenses, will be charged as the most severe that the law and facts allow, will not be plea bargained to a lesser offense, and will instead seek the maximum sentence permitted by law and for the subject to serve 100% of that sentence.

Summary

To conclude, the individual Grand Jurors are appreciative of the experience of this service and doing our part to try and make Nashville a better community.

(Signature Page to Follow)

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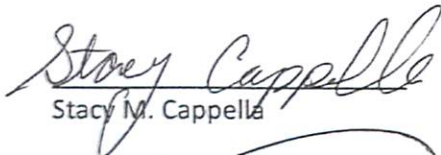


Warner C. Hassell

Regular Grand Jurors:



Anthony Bates

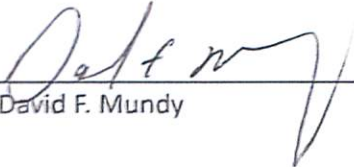


Stacy M. Cappella



David A. Frederick

Jennifer R. Lane



David F. Mundy



Suzanne E. Perlman

Tracey I. Wood



Tamara L. Borgesen



Michael J. Dement




Nicolas G. Hill



Jeffrey J. Miller



Shona M. Paul



Nan Margaret Rush

Alternate Jurors:

Matthew B. Clinkenbeard

Phillip C. Jackson

Clifford T. Johnson, III

Kenneth J. Kincaid

Andrew T. Little

James L. Merryman

Sarah Newcomb

Colby J. Siebersma

Calvin K. Stringfellow

Kenneth A. Whitley