

Upper Marlboro, MD
District Court Trial Session
May 20, 2022

There were four judges in 261 today. Before the session, we heard Judge Brian Denton tell PD Jennifer Park that “someone didn’t show up today,” and she replied, “I hope they’re okay.” So different judges cycled in and out during the morning session. The case of Mr. G was abated by death on April 9, 2022. He was 35 and had no known address. The cause of death was not stated in court nor did Judge Denton inquire about it.

When the case of Mr. H was called, PD Jennifer Park began a conversation with Judge Denton about the fact that this case involved Officer Kenneth Meushaw, 2824, a Graham Report officer (though I did not hear anyone reference that fact). Attorney Park said that the Office of the Public Defender (OPD) had put in a request to review the files on Officer Meushaw but the request had been denied. Instead, the state provided only summaries of those files. The discussion then revolved around the merits of providing the full files as opposed to the summaries only, and PD Park asked Judge Denton to rule on this point today as being relevant to Mr. H’s case. PD Park said that the State had not objected to her having more access to Officer Meushaw’s files, but at some point the county (the office of County Executive Angela Alsobrook) got wind of the matter and they were now objecting to releasing Meushaw’s files to OPD. The ASA’s and county’s position was that the files did not involve incidents that impeached Office Meushaw’s “credibility and bias,” but PD Park said that the summaries showed “use of force complaints and unbecoming conduct that violated police policies” and that this warranted OPD’s having access to them. It was a little confusing at times, with various court precedents being cited. At one point Judge Denton said, “I don’t know what all is going on,” and added that he may talk to Judge Robert Heffron about this. In the end, Judge Denton said that he would take this under consideration and revisit this case at 1:15 this afternoon.

The case of Ms. J was heart-rending. Ms. J was not in the courtroom when Judge Denton entered at 9:00AM, and hers was one of the first cases to be called. There was one witness present for that case; and when Judge Denton issued a bench warrant, that witness left. Ms. J came in around 9:30 or 9:40, and was recognized by the PD, who brought her before Judge Denton. She said she had been in the wrong courtroom. Judge Denton said that it was her responsibility to be in the right courtroom, and said that he doesn't like to call back bench warrants. Then he told her to put her hands behind her back and she did. The bailiff immediately snapped handcuffs on her and led her out of the courtroom. She looked shocked and baffled. I looked around the courtroom and saw someone who I thought must be her

mother. Debbie and I followed her out to the hallway (she was, indeed, Ms. J's mother) and talked to her. She said that they had come to the courthouse before 9:00AM, asked someone for the right courtroom, and were sent to a room one floor below 262. They sat there, realized it was wrong, asked someone again, and were sent to another wrong courtroom where they again realized it was wrong and were finally sent to 262. We gave her a Life After Release flyer and encouraged her to get in touch with them.