

Upper Marlboro, MD
District Court Trial Session
November 17, 2022

This morning, there were 20 trial cases in Room 262B. 8 were nolle prossed, 6 continued, 4 indicted, and 2 bench warrants. The public defender was Carly Lenhoff, the ASA was Elena Ritchie, and the judge was Wennesa Bell Snoddy.

Thursdays must be “drug dockets,” because all the cases today, as in last Thursday, involved CDS. And most were either nolle prossed or continued. A few cases in, ASA Ritchie said that the chemist was on leave and so she had no discovery for that case. She asked for a continuance. (Last week, she said the chemist was “on leave” for three weeks.) PD Lenhoff objected, but Judge Snoddy ordered the continuance anyway. Most of the remaining continuances were joint requests by the prosecution and defense.

Mr. D had his case continued. But right after she ordered the case continued, Judge Snoddy said there was a detainer from Montgomery County for him, and the bailiff put handcuffs on him and led him away. Mr. D did not seem surprised, nor did PD Lenhoff who had presumably forewarned him.

Ms. E represented herself and began by spelling out her name slowly. No sooner had she finished than ASA Ritchie said the state would nolle pros her case. Ms. E began to walk away, asking pointedly, “What about the return of my property?” Judge Snoddy replied so quickly it seemed she was trying to cut her off, and said sharply, “That’s a separate matter!” I went into the hallway with Ms. E, told her who I was and what Courtwatch is, and asked if she wanted to say a bit about the case. She was happy to. She said that twelve officers burst into her apartment and said she was not supposed to sell drugs. It wasn’t drugs, she told me, it was CBD and she had a right to sell it. The officers told her they were going to sell it instead. It was a complicated story and she ended up by saying that she was going to file papers to get her property back -- “we have a constitutional right to our property, right?” she asked.

I also went over to Room 263B, which is the Mental Health Courtroom. Most people there came straight from jail. And most of them went straight back to jail. When Mr. F was brought into the courtroom from jail, his arrival elicited this tactless comment from ASA Mary Grace Waldron, “he’s in Mental Health Court since 2019 and he’s never been a star!” The charges in this case stemmed from an incident in September, 2019. It was put on the stet docket today, with Waldron complaining that Mr. F had never “cooperated” with Mental Health Court.

When bailiffs brought Mr. F into the room, he said "I thought I was going to be in regular court. I would rather take my chances and fight for my constitutional rights. It's been two years and one day in this case and this is an issue of my constitutional rights." His charges stemmed from an incident on November 14, 2020. No one paid any attention to his statement that he did not want to be in Mental Health Court, (though the the rule is that loved ones cannot be sent to or kept in that program against their will). Instead, his case was reset for November 23, so that he "can meet with his attorney and Mr. Gibbs." Mr. Gibbs is the doctor for Mental Health Court.