




MIN Doc MIN
Recorded 04/02/2024 02:31PM

GEORGIA
ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY

Clerk Superior Court, County, Ga.
Ek 02024 Pg 1519-1522
Penalty:

It is ordered that the foregoing presentments of the Grand Jury empanelled for the 2024 January Term of the Superior Court of Athens-Clarke County be entered on the minutes of the Court and published at the expense of the County in the official organ of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. Exhibits are not to be published, but shall be available for inspection and reproduction in the Office of Clerk of Superior Court Athens-Clarke County,

This 2nd day of April, 2024.


Lawton Stephens, Judge
Superior Court Athens-Clarke County
Western Judicial Circuit

Filed in Open Court this 2nd day of April, 2024.


Elisa Zarate, Clerk of Superior Court

General Presentation and Reports
Athens-Clarke County Grand Jury
First Quarter Session 2024

On the 8th day of January 2024, the Honorable Judge Lawton Stephens selected a jury of 25 people including two alternates to the Grand Jury. Judge Lawton Stephens then administered the oath and charged them with their responsibilities.

The jurors then selected Christin Walker as Foreperson, Howard Nelson as Assistant Foreperson, LeeAnn Chism as Secretary, and Traci Pruett as Assistant Secretary.

The remaining jurors were Russ Hicks, Tamera Stephens, JoAnn Johnson, Johnny Brown, Steve Hendriksen, Camille Pfister, Katrese Jones, Sheila Garrett, Adrienne Mitchell, Tracey Rico, Matt Garlitz, Shari Kaplan, Jayden Cheek, Teresa Martin, Kelley Scredon, Mary Taylor, Sarah Jacobs, Makari Bolton, and Cornisha Curry. Alternate jurors were April Stanley and Timothy Welsh.

Criminal Functions

The Grand Jury was presented with 159 cases. Of the cases, 154 were True Bills, 2 were No Bills, and 3 were returned as Split Bills. This activity took place January 9th, January 19th, January 23rd, January 30th, February 6th, February 13th, February 20th, February 27th, March 12th, March 19th, March 26th, and April 2nd.

Jail Inspection

A team of jurors including Katrese Jones and Teresa Martin took a tour to inspect the Athens-Clarke county Jail on March 20th 2024. The jail overall looked clean and they were very thorough in telling us what the different roles were, the problems they have recently had and how they are trying to help the inmates. I really like that the city made a financial investment in a Body Scan which will prevent inmates from concealing illegal drugs on or in their person which has resulted in bodily harm and even death.

Acknowledgments

While the jury knows how understaffed the current office of the District Attorney is, we want to commend and thank Charles Rettiger, the Assistant District Attorney for all of his hard work and preparations made to present case after case to this Grand Jury. Additionally, the Grand Jury appreciated the cooperation of the law enforcement agencies (ACCPD, UGA PD, GBI, GSP, etc.) and would like to thank them for their efforts to maintain the law in Athens Clarke County. Lastly, this Grand Jury would like to thank Bailiff Jackie Lunsford for her guidance, support and positive energy she brought into the room each time the jury met.

General Observations


The Grand Juror room needs guidelines for how the room is left prior to the Grand Jury meeting as it seems to be disorganized. On the days we arrive early, we would see the Bailiff rushing to get the room back in order and the tables would be in disarray. The chair for the witness is currently broken and needs to be replaced. Please consider updating the witness chair to a larger chair with no arms so all officers can sit comfortably.

Furthermore, this jury would have felt more prepared if every juror had been provided with an overview of the daily cases to be reviewed. This practice would facilitate an understanding of the schedule for the day, the progress, the flow, and serve as an overview of the number and type of cases the group will be hearing and possibly discussing throughout the day. This request could be accomplished by utilizing the existing monitor in the Grand Jury room and could also be used to display the individual indictments during their review. We believe this would be very beneficial.

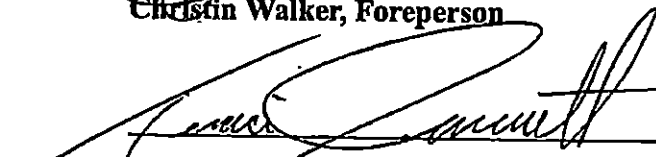
We think the county should provide a document outlining the responsibilities as well as the abilities of a Grand Jury. This document should be given to the Foreman for them to review with the other jurors during cases that may have cause for questioning. There also should be a folder which outlines building inspection options with a list of prior inspections from past Grand Jury's. While most members of the community are familiar with regular jury duty service, they are unfamiliar with the responsibilities and differences in serving on the Grand Jury therefore, having a clear explanation of the (voting process, foreman duties and other details such as the ability of the jury to ask for a change on an indictment, asking for additional evidence, etc.) is all information we would have liked to have received at the beginning.

Closing Remarks

We ask that the court raise the compensation rate grand jurors are given from \$35 to \$50 a day. This increase would help those who do not get paid by their employers. The members of this Grand Jury attended regularly and most had perfect attendance. It was a great learning experience into our judicial system and an honor to serve with all of my fellow jurors and we are thankful to have had the opportunity to serve our community.



Christin Walker, Foreperson



Traci Pruett, Assistant Secretary

SPRING 2024 Jurors

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Christin Walker, Foreperson | <i>C Walker</i> |
| LeeAnn Chism, Secretary | Excused |
| Howard Nelson, Assistant Foreperson | <i>H Nelson</i> |
| Traci Pruett, Assistant Secretary | <i>Traci Pruett</i> |
| Makari Bolton | <i>Makari Bolton</i> |
| Johnny Brown | <i>Johnny Brown</i> |
| Jayden Cheek | <i>Jayden Cheek</i> |
| Cornisha Curry | <i>Cornisha Curry</i> |
| Matt Garlitz | <i>Matt Garlitz</i> |
| Steve Hendriksen | <i>Steve Hendriksen</i> |
| Rusell Hicks | <i>Rusell Hicks</i> |
| Sarah Jacobs | <i>Sarah Jacobs</i> |
| Jo Ann Johnson | <i>Jo Ann Johnson</i> |
| Mary Taylor | <i>Mary Taylor</i> |
| Tamera Stephens | <i>Tamera Stephens</i> |
| Tracey Rico | <i>Tracey Rico</i> |
| Shari Kaplan (duplicate) | |
| Katrese Jones | Excused |
| Shari Kaplan | <i>Shari Kaplan</i> |
| Camille Pfister | <i>Camille Pfister</i> |
| Teresa Martin | <i>Teresa Martin</i> |
| Kelley Scredon | Excused |
| Sheila Garrett | |
| April Stanley (ALTERNATE) | N/A |
| Timothy Welsh (ALTERNATE) | N/A |
| Adrienne Mitchell | <i>Adrienne Mitchell</i> |