

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE

COUNTY OF FORSYTH

SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION

86 CRS 018809

FILED

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

2019 JUN 12 A 11: 42

v.

FORSYTH CO. C.S.C.

OPINION

MERRITT WILLIAMS

BY MT


THIS MATTER came on for hearing before the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission (Commission) on June 4, 2019 through June 7, 2019, pursuant to N.C.G.S. §§ 15A-1460 – 1475. After careful review of the evidence presented, the Commission hereby makes and enters the following findings of fact:

1. On December 17, 1983, Arthur Wilson was found unresponsive in the street on Claremont Avenue and was pronounced dead by emergency medical personnel.
2. On November 18, 1986, Merritt Williams (Williams) was pled guilty to second degree murder related to the death of Arthur Wilson and received a life sentence.
3. On March 8, 2011, Williams applied to the Commission claiming innocence in this case and the Commission began an inquiry pursuant to Article 92, Chapter 15A, of the General Statutes.
4. Throughout the Commission’s inquiry, Williams has fully cooperated with Commission staff in accordance with N.C.G.S. § 15A-1467(g).
5. On June 4, 2019 through June 7, 2019, the Commission held a full evidentiary hearing in this matter pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 15A-1468.
6. During the hearing, the Commission considered testimonial and documentary evidence. The evidence included, among other things:
 - a. A 1604 page brief provided to the Commission by the Commission’s Director prior to the hearing;

- b. Supplemental documentation, in the form of handouts, a PowerPoint presentation, and video recordings provided prior to and during the hearing;
 - c. Live testimony by Commission Associate Director Beth Tanner, Commission Grant Staff Attorney Catherine Matoian, Commission Staff Attorney Brian Ziegler, reconstruction expert Casson Reynolds, trace expert Dr. Max Houck, trace expert Lindsey Admire, pathology expert Dr. Jerri McLemore, confession and psychology expert Dr. Sharon Kelley, and claimant Merritt Williams; and
 - d. Affidavits from Forsyth County Sheriff's Office Public Information Officer Christina Howell, defense attorneys Charles Redden, and Dennis Speaks.
7. After carefully considering this evidence, the Commission has concluded by a vote of 6-2 that there is not sufficient evidence of factual innocence to merit judicial review.

WHEREFORE, pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 15A-1468(c), the above-captioned case is now closed and a copy of this opinion is filed with the Forsyth County Clerk of Superior Court and delivered to the Claimant through his counsel, the Forsyth County District Attorney's Office, and the Honorable L. Todd Burke, Senior Resident Superior Court Judge for Judicial District 21.

This the 7th day of June, 2019.


The Honorable Thomas H. Lock
Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, District 11B
Alternate Chair, North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that the foregoing *Opinion* was served upon the following persons by depositing a copy of the same, postage pre-paid, in an official depository of the United States Postal Service, addressed as follows:

The Honorable L. Todd Burke
Senior Resident Superior Court Judge, Judicial District 21
Forsyth County Courthouse
PO Box 20099
Winston-Salem, NC 27120

The Honorable James O'Neill
District Attorney, Prosecutorial District 31
200 N Main Street
Winston-Salem, NC 27101

Ms. Julie Boyer
Attorney at Law
PO Box 21358
Winston-Salem, NC 27101

This the 12 day of June, 2019.

**NORTH CAROLINA INNOCENCE
INQUIRY COMMISSION**



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