

EDITOR'S PICK

Spotsylvania jury convicts Joshua Williams of murder in death of Heather Ciccone

Keith Epps

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A Spotsylvania jury Monday night recommended a 38-year prison sentence for Joshua Christopher Williams after convicting him of first-degree murder and other charges in connection with the 2015 slaying of county resident Heather Ciccone.

The verdict came toward the end of the sixth day of a trial in Spotsylvania Circuit Court. Williams, 29, was also convicted of conspiracy to commit murder and using a firearm in the commission of a felony.

He will be formally sentenced March 9 by Judge Ricardo Rigual.

Ciccone, 21, was found shot in the back of the head late Dec. 6, 2015, in a secluded driveway on Piney Branch Road. In a closing argument Monday that lasted more than two hours, prosecutor Ryan Mehaffey said Williams and three others conspired to kill Ciccone for multiple reasons involving jealousy, gang activity and drugs.

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Authorities believe Jonathan Vejarano is the man who pulled the trigger. He is charged with the same offenses as Williams, but does not yet have a trial date.

William's brother, Clinton "Eastwood" Williams, was arrested over the weekend on charges of conspiracy and being an accessory after the fact to murder. The fourth person mentioned prominently during the trial, Danielle Long, has not been charged.

According to the prosecution evidence, Williams and Ciccone were having a sexual relationship in 2015. Long, the mother of Williams' children, found out about the relationship after Ciccone picked up a DUI charge in October 2015 while on a date with Williams. Mehaffey said Long

called Ciccone 137 times the day after finding out and went to her home to confront her. “She was mad and she was murderously jealous,” the prosecutor said.

Witnesses said Long’s anger exploded in November 2015, when she sent threatening videos to a couple of Ciccone’s friends and created fake Instagram accounts disparaging Ciccone. In one of the videos, Long was heard saying, “If she wants to live, I better not [expletive] see her. “I’m going to [expletive] her [expletive] up real [expletive] bad.”

Investigators also recovered a Dec. 3, 2015, text from Long to one of her friends in which she wrote, “some people just need to get popped and she’s one of them.”

The evidence also showed that during the week before her death, Ciccone was contacted by Deandre Scott about getting a half-pound of marijuana for him. He offered to pay her a couple of hundred dollars to broker the deal. Ciccone contacted a couple of drug dealers before making arrangements to get the marijuana from Williams and deliver it to Scott. After several false starts, Scott came from Dahlgren to Spotsylvania to meet Ciccone the night of Dec. 6, but she never showed up.

Mehaffey argued that Williams used the would-be drug deal to set up Ciccone’s slaying. He said Long convinced Williams that Ciccone had given them a sexually transmitted disease and that Ciccone was working with the police against Williams.

A string of inmates testified that Vejarano admitted to his role in the slaying while incarcerated. The story was that he would receive \$5,000 worth of marijuana and admittance into Williams’ G-Shyne Blood gang in exchange for carrying out the hit. One inmate said Vejarano told him that Joshua Williams, Clinton Williams and Long were all with him when he pulled the trigger.

Mehaffey said extensive phone records and other evidence eliminated other potential suspects and implicated Williams. Referring to recorded calls from jail last week in which Williams appeared to be concocting an alibi while talking to his brother and Long, Mehaffey said, “on the two-year anniversary of [Ciccone’s] death, he’s still trying to cover it up.”

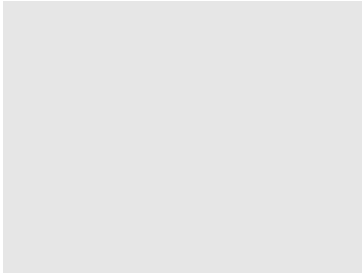
In his closing argument, defense attorney Alexander Raymond said Williams was the victim of a police rush to judgment and “trial by innuendo and Facebook.” He said Ciccone associated with a number of known drug dealers and that some of them were just as likely as Williams to have been involved in the slaying.

Commonwealth’s Attorney Travis Bird acknowledged that some of the prosecution witnesses had unsavory pasts, “but to catch the devil, sometimes you have to go to Hell to get the witnesses.”

Before the jury announced its sentence, Ciccone's sister told them that it "crushed my soul" having to watch her parents see their daughter's dead body. She asked the jurors to give Williams "the same leniency he gave my sister." Mehaffey requested a life sentence.

In presenting their case Friday, defense attorneys called only one witness, Spotsylvania Detective Donnie Reid. They asked him about his interviews with some of the other early suspects.

It was initially announced that Williams was going to testify, but he never took the witness stand.



Williams

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