

PUBLIC SAFETY

Arguing self-defense, Orleans County man is acquitted of murder

A jury this week found Darryl Johnson not guilty of murder and manslaughter for his shooting of Robert Chaplin in 2021.

By Ethan Weinstein

October 11, 2024, 4:56 pm



The Vermont Superior Court building in Newport on March 18, 2024. File photo by Glenn Russell/VTDigger

An Orleans County man successfully argued self-defense this week, three years after he shot and killed a man outside his Greensboro home.

Darryl Johnson faced second-degree murder and manslaughter charges in the shooting death of Robert Chaplin. A jury found him not guilty on both charges on Thursday.

On the night of the shooting, Johnson stepped into a dispute between Chaplin and a store clerk at a Hardwick convenience store, court documents show, and Johnson forced Chaplin out of the store. The disagreement began when the clerk told Chaplin he was too drunk to buy more alcohol.

Later that night, Chaplin showed up at Johnson's home in Greensboro, which he'd threatened to do following the convenience store incident, according to court documents. Johnson shot Chaplin during the confrontation that ensued outside Johnson's home.

Kelly Green, Johnson's defense attorney, said the not guilty findings came despite the fact that the court did not allow her to introduce evidence regarding Chaplin's behavior leading up to the shooting. According to Green, Johnson knew that Chaplin had previously been threatening people in the community with a gun, was under Vermont Department of Corrections supervision, and had been using drugs.

"The judge felt that it was too prejudicial to the state's case," she said. Vermont Superior Court Judge Rory Thibault presided over the case.

Jury draw in the trial began in Orleans Superior criminal court on Sept. 30. A jury began deliberating Wednesday, according to Green, and returned the not guilty verdicts on Thursday afternoon.

Though Johnson was charged with two counts, he could only be convicted of one.

Orleans County State's Attorney Farzana Leyva did not respond to a request for comment on Friday.

Johnson and his wife "received enormous love and support from their community," Green said, "and it kept them sane and well during an enormously stressful situation."

Clarification: Additional information has been added regarding the evidence that was not introduced in the trial.