

COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS
IN THE SUPREME COURT
CRIMINAL LAW DIVISION
2025/CRI/bail/00092

BETWEEN

PETER JOHNSON

Applicant

AND

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

Respondent

Before: **The Hon. Justice Neil Brathwaite**

Appearances: **The Applicant Pro Se**
 Ms. Destiny Morley, Ms. G'Ann Hepburn for the Respondent

Hearing Date: **29th June A.D. 2026**

Ruling Date: **27th July A.D. 2026**

RULING ON BAIL

1. The Applicant is a fifty year old Bahamian male who was charged in March 2025 with one count of Murder. He now seeks bail, a previous application having been refused on 29th July 2025. The Applicant submits that the statements of the witnesses are fabricated, and that a key witness is financially motivated, having claimed that she was in a relationship with the Applicant for money. He further claims that some of the evidence is inadmissible hearsay, and unfair as it contains allegations which were never reported to the police, and which impugn his character. He accepts that he has antecedents, but submits that he has changed his life, and will comply with all conditions if granted bail. The Applicant also references his two minor children, who he says are suffering in his absence, and urges the court to grant bail so that he can provide for his family and retain counsel to defend this matter.

2. In opposing the application, the Respondent proffered the affidavit of Cashena Thompson, Counsel in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, to which is attached a previous affidavit in response sworn by Ashton Williams. The documents exhibited to that affidavit indicate that the Applicant is alleged to have been involved in a toxic relationship with a female, who claimed that the Applicant was violent and abusive. That witness states that the Applicant was at her home when another man stopped by, causing the Applicant to become enraged. The following day another incident occurred during which the witness claims she was threatened with a knife by the Applicant, and later the male who had stopped by returned, and the witness left with that male, eventually going to Smith's Motel. While near that establishment, the Applicant is alleged to have approached the male, sparking an altercation during which the male was stabbed several times, resulting in his death. Another witness has also identified the Applicant as being at that location, and saying he was going to kill someone tonight. The antecedents of the Applicant are also attached, and reveal that he has a record of convictions dating back to 1998 and ending in 2017. He has been convicted 21 times for various offences, including 5 times for assault, 3 times for Threats of Death, and once for Causing Harm. The Applicant has also been convicted of Possession of an Unlicensed Firearm, and Possession of Ammunition.
3. In urging the court to refuse bail, the Respondent submits that the evidence is cogent, and that, having regard to the antecedents of the Applicant, there is a serious danger to public safety, as well as a risk of reoffending and of witness interference, given that the key witness is well known to the Applicant. It was also noted that the trial of this matter is fixed for 3rd May 2027, so that there has been no unreasonable delay, and that there has been no change in circumstances sufficient to warrant a variance of the previous refusal of bail. The Respondent therefore submits that the Applicant should remain in custody pending his trial.

LAW AND ANALYSIS

4. The tensions surrounding an application for bail have been considered in many cases. In **Richard Hepburn and The Attorney General SCCr. App. No 276 of 2014**, Justice of Appeal Allen opined that:

“5. Bail is increasingly becoming the most vexing, controversial and complex issue confronting free societies in every part of the world. It highlights the tension between two important but competing interests: the need of the society to be protected from persons alleged to have committed crime; and the fundamental constitutional canons, which secure freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention and serve as the bulwark against punishment before conviction.

6. Indeed, the recognition of the tension between these competing interests is reflected in the following passage from the Privy Council's decision in *Hurnam The State* [2006] LRC 370. At page 374 of the judgment Lord Bingham said *inter alia*:

"...the courts are routinely called upon to consider whether an unconvicted suspect or defendant shall be released on bail, subject to conditions, pending his trial. Such decisions very often raise questions of importance both to the individual suspect or defendant and to the community as whole. The interests of the individual is, of course, to remain at liberty unless or until he is convicted of crime sufficiently serious to deprive him of his liberty". Any loss of liberty before that time, particularly if he is acquitted or never tried, will prejudice him and, in many cases, his livelihood and his family. But the community has countervailing interests, in seeking to ensure that the course of justice is not thwarted by the flight of the suspect or defendant or perverted by his interference with witnesses or evidence and that he does not take advantage of the inevitable delay before trial to commit further offences..."

5. At paragraph 11 she further noted that

"The general right to bail clearly requires judges on such an application, to conduct realistic assessment of the right of the accused to remain at liberty and the public's interests as indicated by the grounds prescribed in Part A for denying bail. Ineluctably, in some circumstances, the presumption of innocence and the right of an accused to remain at liberty, must give way to accommodate that interest."

6. The presumption of innocence is enshrined in Article 20(2)(a) of the Constitution of The Bahamas which states:

"Every person who is charged with a criminal offence – (a) shall be Presumed to be innocent until he is proved or has pleaded guilty".

7. Furthermore, Article 19(1) provides as follows:

"19. (1) No person shall be deprived of his personal liberty save as may be authorised by law in any of the following cases-

(a) in execution of the sentence or order of a court, whether established for The Bahamas or some other country, in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been convicted or in consequence of his unfitness to plead to a criminal charge or in execution of the order of a court on the grounds of his contempt of that court or of another court or tribunal;
(b) in execution of the order of a court made in order to secure the fulfilment of any obligation imposed upon him by law;

(c) for the purpose of bringing him before a court in execution of the order of a court;

(d) upon reasonable suspicion of his having committed, or of being about to commit, a criminal offence;

(e) in the case of a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years, for the purpose of his education or welfare;

(f) for the purpose of preventing the spread of an infectious or contagious disease or in the case of a person who is, or is reasonably suspected to be, of unsound mind, addicted to drugs or alcohol, or a vagrant, for the purpose of his care or treatment or the protection of the community;

(g) for the purpose of preventing the unlawful entry of that person into The Bahamas or for the purpose of effecting the expulsion, extradition or other lawful removal from The Bahamas of that person or the taking of proceedings relating thereto; and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, a law may, for the purposes of this subparagraph, provide that a person who is not a citizen of The Bahamas may be deprived of his liberty to such extent as may be necessary in the execution of a lawful order requiring that person to remain within a specified area within The Bahamas or prohibiting him from being within such an area.

(2)...

(3) Any person who is arrested or detained in such a case as is mentioned in subparagraph (1)(c) or (d) of this Article and who is not released shall be brought without undue delay before a court; and if any person arrested or detained in such a case as is mentioned in the said subparagraph (1)(d) is not tried within a reasonable time he shall (without prejudice to any further proceedings that may be brought against him) be released either unconditionally or upon reasonable conditions, including in particular such conditions as are reasonably necessary to ensure that he appears at a later date for trial or for proceedings preliminary to trial”.

8. The relevant provisions of the Bail Act Chapter 103 read as follows:

“4. (2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or any other law, any person charged with an offence mentioned in Part C of the First Schedule, shall not be granted bail unless the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeal is satisfied that the person charged

(a) has not been tried within a reasonable time;

(b)...

(c) should be granted bail having regard to all the relevant factors including those specified in Part A of the First Schedule and subsection (2B), and where the court makes an order for the release, on bail, of that person it shall include in the record a written statement giving the reasons for the order of the release on bail.

(2A) For the purposes of subsection (2) (a) ...

(a) without limiting the extent of a reasonable time, a period of three years from the date of the arrest or detention of the person charged shall be deemed to be a reasonable time;

(b) delay which is occasioned by the act or conduct of the accused is to be excluded from any calculation of what is considered to be a reasonable time.

(2B) For the purposes of subsection (2)(c), in deciding whether or not to grant bail to a person charged with an offence mentioned in Part C of the First Schedule, the character and antecedents of the person charged, the need to protect the safety of the public order and where appropriate, the need to protect the safety of the victim or victims of the alleged offence, are to be primary considerations.”

9. The factors referred to in Part A are:

“PART A

In considering whether to grant bail to a defendant, the court shall have regard to the following factors—

(a) whether there are substantial grounds for believing that the defendant, if released on bail, would—

(i) fail to surrender to custody or appear at his trial;

(ii) commit an offence while on bail; or

(iii) interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice, whether in relation to himself or any other person;

(b) whether the defendant should be kept in custody for his own protection or, where he is a child or young person, for his own welfare;

(c) whether he is in custody in pursuance of the sentence of a Court or any authority acting under the Defence Act;

(d) whether there is sufficient information for the purpose of taking the decisions required by this Part or otherwise by this Act;

(e) whether having been released on bail in or in connection with the proceedings for the offence, he is arrested pursuant to section 12;

(f) whether having been released on bail previously, he is charged subsequently either with an offence similar to that in respect of which he was so released or with an offence which is punishable by a term of imprisonment exceeding one year;

(g) the nature and seriousness of the offence and the nature and strength of the evidence against the defendant.”;

9. In an application for bail pursuant to section 4(2)(c), the court is therefore required to consider the relevant factors set out in Part A of the First Schedule, as well as the provisions of section 2B.
10. In considering those factors, I note that the Applicant is charged with a very serious offence which resulted in the death of another. I am mindful that this is not a free-standing ground for the refusal of bail, yet it is an important factor that I must consider in determining whether the accused is likely to appear for trial.
11. In the Court of Appeal decision of *Jonathan Armbrister v The Attorney General SCCrApp. No 45 of 2011*, it was stated that:

“The seriousness of the offence, with which the accused is charged and the penalty which it is likely to entail upon conviction, has always been, and continues to be an important consideration in determining whether bail should be granted or not. Naturally, in cases of murder and other serious offences, the seriousness of the offence should invariably weigh heavily in the scale against the grant of bail”.

12. I note also paragraph 30 of *Jeremiah Andrews vs. The Director of Public Prosecutions SCCrApp No. 163 of 2019* where it states:

“30. These authorities all confirm therefore that the seriousness of the offence, coupled with the strength of the evidence and the likely penalty which is likely to be imposed upon conviction, have always been, and continue to be important considerations in determining whether bail should be granted or not. However, these factors may give rise to an inference that the defendant may abscond. That inference can be weakened by the consideration of other relevant factors disclosed in the evidence. eg the applicant’s resources, family connections..

13. While no direct evidence has been provided that the Applicant will not appear for his trial, the Applicant is charged with Murder which, attracts a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. That possible sentence raises the issue of the likelihood of not appearing for trial.
14. That likelihood of flight must be contrasted with the nature of the evidence against the Applicant. In *Cordero McDonald v. The Attorney General SCCrApp. No. 195 of 2016*, Allen P., at *paragraph 34* stated,

“It is not the duty of a judge considering a bail application to decide disputed facts or law. Indeed, it is not expected that on such an application a judge will conduct a forensic examination of the evidence. The judge must simply decide whether the evidence raises a reasonable suspicion of the commission of the offences by the appellant, such as to justify the deprivation of his liberty by arrest, charge and detention. Having done that he must then consider the relevant factors and determine whether he ought to grant him bail.”

15. In considering the cogency of the evidence, I note the following statement from the Court of Appeal in Stephon Davis v DPP SCCrApp. No. 20 of 2023:

“In our view "strong and cogent evidence" is not the critical factor on a bail application. The judge is only required to evaluate whether the witness statements show a case that is plausible on its face. To put it another way, there must be some evidence before the court capable of establishing the guilt of the appellant. In essence, the test is prima facie evidence, comparable to what is required at the end of the prosecution's case in a criminal trial. We can find a useful summary of the strength of the evidence required at the end of the prosecution's case in the headnote to the Privy Council's decision in Ellis Taibo [1996] 48 WIR 74:

"On a submission of no case to answer, the criterion to be applied by the trial judge is whether there is material on which a jury could, without irrationality, be satisfied of guilt; if there is, the judge is required to allow the trial to proceed.”

16. In reviewing what has been placed before me, I note that the affidavit in response states that the Applicant has been identified by a witness as the person who stabbed the deceased, and by another person as being in the vicinity of the crime while in an angry state. That evidence in my view rises to the level of a strong prima facie case as is required in Stephon Davis decision above.
17. While bearing in mind the presumption of innocence, I am concerned that the Applicant in this matter faces a weighty penalty if convicted such as to raise the inference of a risk of flight. I am more concerned with the antecedents of the Applicant, which shows a long history of violent behavior, so that there is in my view a serious danger to public order, and a serious risk of re-offending.

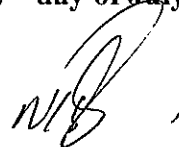
CONCLUSION

18. In considering whether conditions could be imposed to ensure the attendance of the Applicant at trial, I am mindful of the usual conditions which include reporting, electronic monitoring device (“EMD”), and curfew. In my view those conditions could

suffice to ensure the attendance of the Applicant at his trial, but they would not suffice to eliminate the risk to public safety, or the risk of re-offending.

19. In the circumstances and having regard to the foregoing reasons I find that the Applicant is not a fit and proper candidate to be admitted to bail. Bail is therefore denied.

Dated this 27th day of July A.D., 2026



Neil Brathwaite
Justice