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Man Convicted of Felony Driving Under the Influence Causing Death is Sentenced to 14 Years

Charleston, S.C.-- Solicitor Scarlett Wilson announced that on Tuesday, September 6, Thomas Cade Garris pled guilty to Felony Driving Under the Influence Causing Death and two counts of Felony Driving Under the Influence Causing Great Bodily Injury. Garris faced a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 25 years on the most serious charge. He was sentenced to 14 years' incarceration by the Honorable Robert J. Bonds. The plea came as the State was preparing to select a jury for Garris' trial.

Assistant Solicitors Sharita Cannon and Chad Simpson prosecuted the case against Garris, assisted by Investigator Charles Jolliff. During the lengthy plea hearing, Simpson recounted that in the early morning hours of January 26, 2019, 30-year-old Garris and his girlfriend left the Calhoun Street bar "Mynt" after being asked to leave the establishment for rowdy behavior. After arguing for some time in the alleyway next to the bar, Garris drove his Ford F-150 truck from a nearby parking lot and picked up his girlfriend, who needed assistance from several others to stand and get into the truck.

Garris then proceeded North on Meeting Street. Eyewitnesses recounted that his truck was traveling at a dangerous rate of speed when Garris disregarded a solid red stoplight and struck a Mazda Sedan which was lawfully traveling through the intersection of Meeting and Columbus Streets. Tragically, the collision proved fatal for the front passenger of the Sedan. The driver and a rear passenger also were seriously injured, requiring months of medical treatment and rehabilitation. Later analysis of Garris's truck's data recorder revealed his speed at the time of collision to be approximately 56 miles per hour. The speed limit at the intersection is 35 miles per hour. Analyses of Garris's blood showed that his blood alcohol content at the time of the collision was at least .162, twice the legal limit to operate a vehicle in South Carolina.

The Ninth Circuit Solicitor's office is especially appreciative of the surviving victims of this crime and the family of the deceased, who have shown great patience and restraint throughout a difficult criminal process. The office also appreciates the hard work of the City of Charleston Police Department, particularly their Major Accident Investigation Team.

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