

Circuit Court for Howard County
Case No. C-13-CR-24-000191

UNREPORTED

IN THE APPELLATE COURT

OF MARYLAND

No. 1491

September Term, 2024

MICHAEL JAMES REED

v.

STATE OF MARYLAND

Graeff,
Berger,
Kenney, James A., III
(Senior Judge, Specially Assigned),

JJ.

PER CURIAM

Filed: January 2, 2026

*This is a per curiam opinion. Under Rule 1-104, the opinion is not precedent within the rule of stare decisis, nor may it be cited as persuasive authority.

Convicted by a jury in the Circuit Court for Howard County of second degree assault, attempt by a driver to elude uniformed police by failing to stop, and related offenses, Michael James Reed, appellant, presents for our review a single issue: whether the evidence is sufficient to sustain the convictions. For the reasons that follow, we shall affirm the judgments of the circuit court.

At trial, the State produced evidence that on March 22, 2024, a woman called Howard County 911 and stated that “a group of guys that . . . had masks on” were “walking around the Long Gate/Overlook neighborhood,” “looking at cars,” and “looking into breaking cars.” The woman stated that the men arrived in what “look[ed] like a white Nissan Altima,” and were “sitting in the church parking lot.” The woman also stated that all three of the men were African-American, the driver was wearing a ski mask, and the other two men had “bandannas around their face.”

Howard County Police Officer Demetrius Fortson was subsequently dispatched to Bethel Overlook in response to the 911 call. Arriving at the location, Officer Fortson “saw a white Ford Taurus with a front Virginia license plate.” The officer saw one African-American person “sitting in the driver’s seat” of the Taurus and another “sitting in the front passenger seat.” When Officer Fortson “proceeded to exit [his] vehicle” to “speak to the occupants” of the Taurus, the officer heard “a loud rev of the motor.” Officer Fortson saw the Taurus “coming at [him] very quickly,” and “tried to dive back into [his] vehicle.” The Taurus struck the driver’s door of Officer Fortson’s vehicle, which in turn struck the officer and injured his lower jaw and left calf and shin. At trial, Officer Fortson confirmed that there was “enough space for a car to fit through on either side” of the officer’s vehicle.

The State offered into evidence video footage recorded by surveillance cameras at the Bethel Baptist Church, which is located on Bethel Overlook. The footage reflects that at 5:30 p.m., a white four-door car stopped near the entrance of the church's parking lot. Two individuals, one wearing black pants and one wearing gray pants, exited the car and walked into the neighborhood. A third individual subsequently drove the car into the church's parking lot and parked it. At 5:47 p.m., the car exited the parking lot, and the individual wearing black pants entered the front passenger seat. Approximately twenty seconds later, Officer Fortson arrived, parked his vehicle in front of the white car, and began to exit his vehicle. The white car subsequently accelerated and struck the driver's door of the officer's vehicle.

Howard County Police Officer Keenan Black, who had also been dispatched to Bethel Overlook, saw the Taurus strike Officer Fortson's vehicle, fail to stop at a traffic light, and turn right onto Montgomery Road. Officer Black "initiated [his] emergency equipment" and "attempted to stop the . . . Taurus." When the Taurus "attempted to take the exit onto Route 29," it "entered into a skid," "went over the curb," "took out a light pole," and "went into the guardrail." Officer Black saw "a skinny black male" wearing "a black hoodie and light-colored jeans" flee from the "rear passenger side," and "a heavier set black male" flee from the "front passenger side." At trial, Officer Black identified Mr. Reed as the person "who got out of the rear passenger" side of the Taurus. The men ran toward Route 29 and "jumped the fence." Howard County Police Corporal Nicholas Meyer subsequently responded to the "bridge that goes over Route 29" and observed a man, later identified as Antonio McAllister, "laying on the ground." The State offered into evidence

video footage recorded by Officers Meyer’s body-worn camera, which depicts Mr. McAllister wearing black pants.

Howard County Police Officer Catherine Salcedo and Corporal Amir Mitchell were subsequently “dispatched to the area of Montgomery Road and Route 29” to look for “suspects that had fled from the crash of the vehicle after it hit the ramp.” The officers received a description of the suspect as “a black male wearing light blue jeans and a black hoodie,” who was “probably in the area of St. John’s and Columbia Road.” Near the intersection of Columbia Road and Labrador Lane, which is “between half a mile and a mile” from “where the accident was” on Route 29, Officer Salcedo observed Mr. Reed, who was wearing “[l]ight blue jeans and a long sleeve gray shirt” and had “a black hoodie in his hand,” “crouched in between the trees.” When Mr. Reed saw the officer, he “ran towards the back of [a] house.” Officer Salcedo pursued Mr. Reed, who “ran back towards Labrador Lane,” opened the “back passenger door” of a “silver SUV,” and entered the vehicle. The officers “conducted a felony vehicle stop” of the SUV and discovered Mr. Reed in the trunk.

The State also called Mr. McAllister, who testified that on March 22, 2024, he was driven by Mr. Reed to Howard County in “a white looking police car.” Mr. McAllister testified that he and Mr. Reed “were in the rear of a church parking lot” when the following happened:

I came back from the store and I got inside the passenger’s seat and the police pulled up. And when the police pulled up, I’m, like, oh, my God, we got to get out. But my – well, I thought he was my friend. He said no, and he decided to drive off. So I hopped in the back seat and once he crashed the car, I got out and I started running and I hopped over a ledge.

Mr. McAllister testified that when he “entered the car, [he] got inside the front passenger” seat. When “the police came up into the car,” Mr. McAllister stated: “[O]h, my God, we’re going to go to jail.” Mr. Reed stated: “[N]o, we’re not.” Mr. McAllister specified that Mr. Reed was the driver of the car when Mr. McAllister “entered the car,” when the car “started driving off,” and when the car “crashed into the guardrail.”

Mr. Reed first contends that the “State did not offer sufficient evidence that [he] was the driver of the car that hit the police vehicle.” We disagree. Mr. McAllister testified unequivocally that Mr. Reed was driving the Taurus when it “started driving off.” Also, the video footage produced by the State reflects that the individual who entered the front passenger seat of the Taurus, before it struck Officer Fortson’s vehicle, was wearing black pants, and that Mr. McAllister was wearing black pants when he was apprehended by Officer Meyer. From this evidence, a rational trier of fact could conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that Mr. Reed was driving the Taurus at the time that it struck Officer Fortson’s vehicle.

Mr. Reed next contends that the “evidence at most showed that the hitting of the police vehicle was accidental.” We disagree. The video footage produced by the State reflects that at the time that Officer Fortson stopped his vehicle in front of the Taurus, the Taurus was stopped. After Officer Fortson opened his driver’s door and began to exit his vehicle, the Taurus quickly accelerated toward the driver’s side of the officer’s vehicle and struck the door. The footage also reflects that Mr. Reed had sufficient room to drive around the front of Officer Fortson’s vehicle to the passenger’s side of the vehicle, and the officer

confirmed that that there was “enough space for a car to fit through on [that] side” of his vehicle. Moreover, Mr. McAllister testified that just prior to driving the car into the driver’s door of Officer Fortson’s vehicle, Mr. Reed indicated that he and Mr. McAllister were not “going to go to jail.” From this evidence, a rational trier of fact could conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that Mr. Reed intended to strike Officer Fortson’s vehicle, and hence, the evidence is sufficient to sustain the convictions.

**JUDGMENTS OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
FOR HOWARD COUNTY AFFIRMED.
COSTS TO BE PAID BY APPELLANT.**