

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
RHODE ISLAND TRAFFIC TRIBUNAL

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND	:	
	:	
v.	:	C.A. No. T26-0003
	:	25412600658
	:	
NATHAN BELISLE	:	

DECISION

PER CURIAM: Before this Panel on May 20, 2026—Magistrate Abilheira (Chair), Chief Magistrate DiSandro, and Administrative Magistrate DiChiro—is the appeal of Nathan Belisle (Appellant) from a decision of Magistrate Noonan of the Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal, sustaining the charged violation of G.L. 1956 § 31-26-4 “Failure to Notify of Collision with Unattended Vehicle.” Appellant did not appear before this Panel. Jurisdiction is pursuant to G.L. 1956 § 31-41.1-8. For reasons set forth in this Decision, Appellant’s appeal is denied.

I

Facts and Travel

At trial, Detective Thomas Gormley of the Woonsocket Police Department testified that on October 29, 2025, at approximately 9:30 a.m., Robert Galipeau (Mr. Galipeau) filed a formal complaint with Officer Omar Diedhiou (Officer Diedhiou) after discovering that his Nissan Rogue had been struck while parked in the parking lot of Bullseye Shooting Supply. Tr. 9:12-18. Detective Gormley testified that the matter was subsequently assigned to him for further investigation. *Id.*

Surveillance footage obtained by Officer Diedhiou depicted a white Ford F-150 reversing into and striking the rear right quarter panel of Mr. Galipeau's Nissan Rogue. Detective Gormley testified that the truck possessed several distinctive characteristics, including trailer tow mirrors,

identifiable stickers on the rear window, and a pickup truck bed cover. *Id.* Utilizing the Flock camera system, Detective Gormley identified a matching vehicle on October 31, 2025. The system matched a white Ford F-150 bearing Rhode Island combination registration plate 1YG-2552, which was registered to Appellant.

Detective Gormley also obtained surveillance footage from Park Avenue Pizza, which further depicted the same vehicle. Based upon the surveillance footage, the Flock camera information, and the vehicle registration records, Detective Gormley went to Appellant's residence and photographed the truck parked in Appellant's driveway. Detective Gormley testified that the truck exhibited minor damage consistent with the collision involving Mr. Galipeau's vehicle.

Detective Gormley further testified that upon speaking with Park Avenue Pizza staff and watching the surveillance footage, he observed Appellant purchasing items on the night of the collision, at approximately 9:40 P.M. *See* Tr. 10: 12-20. Detective Gormley observed footage of Appellant purchasing his items, exit the building and enter the F150 truck, before reversing and striking Mr. Galipeau's vehicle. *Id.*

During cross-examination, Appellant's counsel, questioned Detective Gormley regarding the quality of the surveillance footage, arguing that the driver's face could not be clearly identified in any of the images admitted into evidence.

Appellant testified on his own behalf. He stated that he did not recall leaving his home on the day of the collision and did not remember being involved in a collision on October 28, 2025. Tr. 30: 4-5. Appellant further testified that he first learned of the incident in November and maintained that his truck had not sustained any damage. *Id.*

After hearing all available evidence, the Trial Magistrate found Detective Gormley to be entirely credible and expressly adopted his testimony as his findings of fact. The Trial Magistrate

viewed the surveillance videos admitted into evidence and found that the truck's unique characteristics were clearly visible in the footage. Tr. 27:2. The Trial Magistrate further found that the surveillance videos depicted Appellant purchasing food before returning to his truck, reversing into Mr. Galipeau's parked vehicle, and leaving the scene by traveling onto Park Avenue in Woonsocket without stopping to notify the owner of the damaged vehicle. As such, the Trial Magistrate found Appellant guilty of G.L. 1956 § 31-26-4 "Failure to Notify of Collision with Unattended Vehicle." Aggrieved by the decision, Appellant filed this timely appeal.

II

Standard of Review

Pursuant to § 31-41.1-8, the Appeals Panel of the Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal (RITT) possesses appellate jurisdiction to review an order of a judge or magistrate. Section 31-41.1-8(f) provides in pertinent part:

"The appeals panel shall not substitute its judgment for that of the judge or magistrate as to the weight of the evidence on questions of fact. The appeals panel may affirm the decision of the judge or magistrate, or it may remand the case for further proceedings or reverse or modify the decision if the substantial rights of the appellant have been prejudiced because the judge's findings, inferences, conclusions or decisions are:

- (1) In violation of constitutional or statutory provisions;
- (2) In excess of the statutory authority of the judge or magistrate;
- (3) Made upon unlawful procedure;
- (4) Affected by other error of law;
- (5) Clearly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative, and substantial evidence on the whole record; or
- (6) Arbitrary or capricious or characterized by abuse of discretion or clearly unwarranted exercise of discretion."

In reviewing a hearing judge or magistrate's decision pursuant to § 31-41.1-8, this Panel "lacks the authority to assess witness credibility or to substitute its judgment for that of the hearing judge [or magistrate] concerning the weight of the evidence on questions of fact." *Link v. State*,

633 A.2d 1345, 1348 (R.I. 1993) (citing *Liberty Mutual Insurance Co. v. Janes*, 586 A.2d 536, 537 (R.I. 1991)). “The review of the appeals panel is confined to a reading of the record to determine whether the judge’s [or magistrate’s] decision is supported by legally competent evidence or is affected by an error of law.” *Id.* (citing *Environmental Scientific Corp. v. Durfee*, 621 A.2d 200, 208 (R.I. 1993)). “In circumstances in which the appeals panel determines that the decision is ‘[c]learly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative, and substantial evidence on the whole record,’ or is affected by ‘error of law,’ it may remand, reverse, or modify the decision.” *Id.* “Otherwise, it must affirm the hearing judge’s [or magistrate’s] conclusions” on appeal. *Id.*; see *Janes*, 586 A.2d at 537.

III

Analysis

Appellant argues on appeal that the Trial Magistrate erred in finding him guilty of violating G.L. 1956 § 31-26-4, “Failure to Notify of Collision with an Unattended Vehicle.” Specifically, Appellant contends that the evidence presented at trial was insufficient to support the finding that he struck Mr. Galipeau’s vehicle and failed to provide the notice required by the statute. See Appellant’s Notice of Appeal. Appellant further argues that the Trial Magistrate erred in finding his testimony not credible.

Upon review of the record, this Panel concludes that the Trial Magistrate’s decision is supported by legally competent evidence. *Link*, 633 A.2d at 1348. This Panel may not substitute its judgment for that of the Trial Magistrate concerning the credibility of witnesses, the weight of the evidence, or the reasonable inferences drawn from the evidence. *Link*, 633 A.2d at 1348.

The evidence at trial included Detective Gormley’s testimony, surveillance footage, the Flock camera data, and the photographs depicting Appellant’s unique vehicle. This provided a sufficient evidentiary basis for the Trial Magistrate to reasonably infer that Appellant was the one that struck

Mr. Galipeau's Nissan Rogue. *See State v. Tweedie*, 444 A.2d 855, 858 (R.I. 1982) ("It is well settled that it is the duty of the factfinder to draw inferences.") (citations omitted).

Moreover, the Trial Magistrate was entitled to credit Detective Gormley's testimony and reject Appellant's testimony. Questions of witness credibility are uniquely within the province of the factfinder and are entitled to substantial deference on appellate review. *Link*, 633 A.2d at 1348.

Because this Panel may not substitute its judgment for that of the Trial Magistrate concerning the weight of the evidence, the credibility of witnesses, or the reasonable inferences drawn from the evidence, it will not disturb the Trial Magistrate's findings. Accordingly, this Panel concludes that the Trial Magistrate's decision was not "affected by . . . error of law" and was not "[c]learly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative, and substantial evidence on the whole record." *See* § 31-41.1-8(f)(4)-(5).

IV

Conclusion

This Panel has reviewed the entire record in this matter. Having done so, the members of this Panel are satisfied that the Trial Magistrate's decision was neither clearly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative, and substantial evidence on the whole record nor arbitrary or capricious or characterized by abuse of discretion or clearly unwarranted exercise of discretion. Accordingly, Appellant's appeal is denied.

ENTERED:

 /S/
Magistrate Abilheira (Chair)

 /S/
Chief Magistrate DiSandro

 /S/
Administrative Magistrate DiChiro

DATE: July 21, 2026