

Defense questions police action in stopping murder suspect's van

By STEPHEN REDSHAW

The lawyer representing Edward Abrams, accused of murdering his lover's husband, argued yesterday that Franklin Township police had "no good reason whatsoever" to stop his client as he drove away from the scene of the crime.

Attorney Steven Altman of New Brunswick appeared before Superior Court Judge Graham T. Ross in Somersetville in an attempt to have the murder weapon, a shotgun seized when Abrams was pulled over, ruled inadmissible as evidence.

Somerset County Assistant Prosecutor Edward Coleman objected to the motion, contending the policeman's actions were "fully warranted" under the circumstances.

Abrams, 19, and Dawn Jones, 36, are charged with murder and conspiracy to commit murder in the Nov. 28 death of Leonard Jones, who was shot twice in the back outside his house. In a taped statement, Abrams said he and Jones had been lovers for seven months and that he killed her husband "so we could be together."

Jones, who is free on bail and appeared in court yesterday with her attorney, has denied any involvement in the murder.

Altman said the police did not have probable cause to pull Abrams over and, therefore, any evidence seized during the stop must be thrown out. But Sgt. Joseph Sierotowicz, who stopped Abrams, testified that there were at least three reasons to pull him over.

The officer said he had just turned onto Butler Road, where a neighbor had reported a shooting minutes earlier, when he passed Abrams driving away from the scene.

"This van was coming down a rural road at 2 a.m., coming from an area where I believed there had just been a shooting," Sierotowicz said. "They would have had to come by the scene of the shooting. There were no other cars on the road. If nothing else, they may have witnessed something."

The officer also said Abrams acted suspiciously when the two vehicles slowed to pass each other on the narrow, winding country road. The officer said Abrams "looked at me and then turned away quickly."

Woman killed in fight over man

By KEVIN DILWORTH

A 20-year-old Orange woman died yesterday after being attacked in the street by six women who beat her before they stabbed her, according to Police Director Charles Cobbett.

Authorities identified the victim as Aliha Reese of New Street. She was stabbed at New and Park streets about 1:30 a.m. Police said the fight was over a man.

Cobbett said arrest warrants have been issued for the six women suspects. He declined to release their names.

Reese and one of the suspects apparently fought over a man, Cobbett noted. The dispute took place shortly before midnight Tuesday.

After the two fought in the street, the suspect left

Reese, drove into Newark, got five women friends and the group returned to Orange in a van and a car, Cobbett said.

According to the police director, they saw Reese "on the corner of Park and New streets, jumped her, beat her and stabbed her twice, once in the leg and once in the heart."

The victim "started running west on New Street, towards West Orange, but collapsed in the street," he added.

Neighbors called the police. When several patrol cars responded to the intersection they found Reese "sprawled on the ground and bleeding," Cobbett noted.

An ambulance took Reese to Orange Memorial Hospital, where she was pronounced dead at 2:15 a.m., he said.

Sussex urged to expand board and strengthen administrator post

By PATTY PAUGH

Sussex County government is not functioning at a peak level because it has not given its administrator enough control over daily operations, has too few freeholders to share the workload and lacks an administrative code, according to a report released yesterday.

The document, prepared by the Sussex County Charter Study Commission, urges the freeholders to strengthen the administrator's post, put a referendum on the ballot to expand the board to five members and adopt an administrative code.

The two-inch-thick, \$11,000 report culminates 10 months of work undertaken by the panel, which examined the structure of county government and its needs. The commission was established in November after voters passed a referendum calling for its creation.

The 11-member panel submitted 10 unanimous recommendations on how county government should be organized, including expanding the freeholder board from three members and adopting an administrative code that includes proscriptions against conflict-of-interest violations.

One key shortcoming cited by the commission was the administrator's task of overseeing 40 departments, a number it deemed unmanageable.

The group also agreed the administrator's job should be strengthened to place him in charge of day-to-day operations and replace the freeholders' involvement in that capacity, according to the report.

The administrative code should "limit what some department heads candidly felt to be too much day-to-day involvement by freeholders in their agencies over the years," the report stated.

The freeholders' primary functions are as makers of policy and law, according to the report.

Despite the unanimity on these points, the group differed over whether the county should be organized under a charter form of government based on parameters spelled out in state law.

A majority of the commission rejected the charter form and instead recommended the government be re-

vamped based on provisions allowed under legislation sponsored by Assembly Majority Leader Garabed (Chuck) Haytaian (R-Sussex) and Sen. Carmen Orechio (D-Essex). The measure was enacted last year.

Using this approach, the freeholders will be able to reform county government without being bogged down by the requirements of a charter form, argued commission member and Andover Township Mayor David Mortimer.

But a minority of the commission felt a noncharter government would not include the safeguards guaranteed with a charter form, maintained commission chairman and Newton Councilman John Iliff. For example, he said, a charter government could only be changed by referendum unlike a noncharter form.

"One of the strengths of the charter form is it can't be tinkered with by a whim of the freeholders. I'm not saying it would happen, but freeholders have been known to change their minds," Iliff said.

But Mortimer questioned why elected officials would take such an action when it would result in chaos and a foolish political move.

In addition, he pointed out the freeholders would not be able to change governmental structure without holding a public hearing. Under those circumstances, Mortimer reasoned public scrutiny would be enough to deter any adverse changes.

The majority of the commission also maintained its recommendations would be least disruptive to county government. If a charter form of government had been recommended and approved by voters, all freeholders would have to run again, perhaps leading to a complete turnover on the board and delays in action on key issues, according to Mortimer.

"We've had too much indecision in the past. We're just starting to get some decisions," he said.

Based on the commission's recommendations, Mortimer noted progress on key projects should not be impeded by the outcome of an election because the majority of the board will not change every year. Under the commission's suggestions, one freeholder seat would be available in one year, followed by two posts in two subsequent years.

Businesses fight threat from garage

By FREDERICK W. BYRD

Owners of several small businesses that could be displaced if a proposed seven-level parking garage is built in downtown Newark are protesting to city officials.

"We have good, viable businesses and we do not want to move," said Philip Lindeman, attorney for the owners of The Famous Restaurant on Bank Street.

The businessmen met with Harold Lucas, director of development and Alfred Faiella, director of the Newark Economic Development Corp., Tuesday to discuss plans by Time Equities Inc. of New York.

The firm, which is renovating the Gibraltar Building on Washington Street, wants to build the 1,100-car parking garage on a block bounded by Bank, Washington and Academy streets and University Avenue.

While 90 percent of the block is parking lots owned by Macy's, which will have an interest in the new parking deck, several businessmen are opposed to the move.

"We feel small-business people shouldn't have their property taken away just so a larger, private business can have parking," said Harold Krieger, an attorney for a coalition of businessmen.

Tom Terreri, president of Power-Play Records on Washington Street, said the four businesses—two restaurants, a bank and a bar—employ 55 people, 26 of them Newark residents and 16 percent members of minority groups.

Karen Urbano, a waitress at The Famous, said, "Why can't you build the garage around us and save our businesses?"

"We feel this is for people from out of Newark; Newark residents could take public transportation to work."

"Even if you give us another place, what guarantee is there our customers will follow us?" she asked.

Lucas said, "There will always be some winners and losers in the development process; we try our best to have winners and winners."

"The question is what is best for the entire city."

"It goes without saying there is a lack of parking in downtown Newark."

"We feel it is in the best interest of the city these larger projects go forward."

"Macy's plans to bring in 700 to 1,000 additional administrative employees. The Time Equities project will mean 1,500 to 2,000 new jobs."

"So the city must decide if it is better to get all these jobs or to save four businesses," he said.

Representatives of Time Equities have said before that the garage is necessary to make their office space salable.

Faiella added, "The city looked at building the garage around the businesses. It would not be feasible."

"As it is now, this seven-level garage (proposal) is not economical. If we had to build it higher to get the same number of spaces, it would not be possible," he said.

The city council had been scheduled to vote on a blight declaration, condemning the four properties, this week.

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