

Morrisville man pleads guilty to killing wife

From staff reports

Morrisville resident Allen Holman pleaded guilty March 17 to first-degree murder in the death of his estranged wife last July after chasing her down NC 55 and shooting her in the parking lot of the Phillips 66 at NC 55 and Olive Chapel Road.

On the advice of attorneys, Holman, 38, admitted in Wake County Superior Court that he shot his wife, Linda, 49, of Route 1, Box 106 off Green Level to Durham Road twice in the back at 6 a.m., July 28.

Holman changed the plea prior to the jury selection, which is expected to take about a week.

Seven jurors had been chosen to hear the case by Monday morning. Prosecutor Susan Spurlin is seeking the death penalty in the case.

On the morning of July 8, police received a 911 call from Ms. Holman who was calling from a cellular phone in her car.

She said her husband was following her and bumping her car on the highway.

Officers met Ms. Holman at the gas station and she pointed out Allen's car.

Officers then pursued Mr. Holman, but lost sight of him briefly after he turned down Olive Chapel Road.

"Up to that point there was no indication of a weapon," Apex police chief Ronnie Hearn said at the time.

The police realized Mr. Holman had turned back into the parking lot and found him pointing a shotgun in the direction of his wife.

Officer J.R. Denson drew his weapon and ordered Mr. Holman to drop the gun.

Hearn said Denson did not shoot for fear of hitting bystanders in the background.

When Mr. Holman got back into his car, Denson did the same. Mr. Holman then fired the shotgun from

the window of his car into his wife's Mazda Miata, Hearn said.

Ms. Holman was struck in the back and side by the shotgun blast.

Witnesses on the scene said they heard a shot and then saw Ms. Holman lying facedown on the ground.

She was transported to Wake Med, where she died.

Mr. Holman fled in his car back to Linda Holman's house.

He was pursued by Officer Denson and Officer Gilbert, while officers Maynard and Kerley assisted Ms. Holman.

A standoff ensued, during which Holman fired at officers.

Then Holman turned the gun on himself.

He was taken to Wake Med with a gunshot wound to the stomach. A 20-gauge shotgun was recovered from the scene.

He was treated and then taken to the Central Prison hospital.

Former mayor asks board to fire town manager

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been critical of Police Chief Bruce Newnam, and had wanted Hodgkins to take action against him.

After an hour and a half executive session to discuss personnel on February 23 at which no action was taken, a special meeting was called March 2 at which Hodgkins was instructed to investigate complaints from the police department and perform seven other tasks in the next 60 days as a condition of continuing his employment with the town.

At the March 9 meeting, Case responded during the time for commissioner's comments that "I can't terminate a man I don't know that much about on hearsay. . . . Any decision from this board basically lies on my shoulders. I cannot do it at this time."

After Case's statement, Silver-Smith shouted that he believed he was not told the truth (by Case) after calling two different executive sessions. He also said that he has heard that the police chief has hired a private investigator to investigate him (Silver-Smith).

At the work session, which Silver-Smith did not attend, each commissioner presented his goals for the manager, which mostly turned out to be goals for the future of the town.

Topics ranged from organizing next year's Christmas Parade to the status of potholes on town roads, to getting a water and sewer contract for the town.

Hodgkins promised to work on hiring a town engineer; work on obtaining both water and sewer for the town (and to do a feasibility study on the various options that are being considered); to be more assertive with architects and contractors for the long-past-due police building; to develop a timeline for revising the town land use plan; to contact former commissioner Phyllis Newnam about heading up the Christmas parade again; to do a salary study of town departments; to investigate complaints from the police department; and to study the fee structures of everything from parks and recreation to inspections.

Jan Faulkner said, "For a long time

'I can't terminate a man I don't know that much about on hearsay. . . . Any decision from this board basically lies on my shoulders. I cannot do it at this time.'

—Bill Case, commissioner

this town has been putting fires out. There has been not enough planning ahead, to help keep our heads above water. The last three to five years, there has been no getting ahead. It will take double time to get ahead."

Faulkner's top priority was the land use plan, to be followed shortly by a capital improvements plan and a transportation plan. She also asked that Hodgkins share the various options on water and sewer with the board, including availability, time frame, cost, reliability, length of contract and other pros and cons.

C.T. Moore, who has been a staunch supporter of the town manager since he was hired about two years ago, said he would like to see a town engineer hired, the water contract completed, a land use plan started, and the police building finished. He also suggested a study of user fees, and to start on the town Christmas parade.

Leavy Barbee and Case echoed the feelings of the other two, with Barbee pushing for the town to hire a part-time person to help monitor bad roads, zoning matters, notify the town about trash being dumped, and even monitor police matters.

Case echoed the concern about roads, and Barbee complained about tall grass in some yards, but was told that the town cannot require anyone to cut grass unless it is over 18 inches tall.

Hodgkins said the town routinely reports road problems to DOT, but that state officials are only in town about once a month unless there is a life-threatening situation. He said he will try to step up efforts to get road officials here more often.

Hodgkins said the water contract with Durham should be signed, sealed, and delivered by May 1. He

said he was within a week of hiring the town engineer.

The land use plan will take up to six months to complete, but a meeting will be held with the town planner to get the wheels in motion during one of the regularly scheduled board meetings in March.

User fees for building permits, recreational services, utility fees, and even getting copies of police reports are already being studied, Hodgkins said. He said Morrisville's fees are below most jurisdictions in this area. He planned to include the information in the budget process, but instead will develop a report in the next 60 days.

He will begin interviewing key personnel in the police department regarding potential problems there, and will continue with a salary study for all town departments.

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Local man dies after being buried at construction site

By Mary Beth Phillips

Morrisville resident Mark Swartwood died at Western Wake Medical Center on February 27, after a trench collapsed on him Feb. 10 at a Morrisville construction site.

He was partially buried in dirt for a little over two hours from about 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at a lot in the Brookmere subdivision off Davis Drive, which is part of Preston.

Swartwood, 33, of 2206 Duck Pond Circle in Huntington Apartments, had been discharged from Duke on Feb. 16 and moved to the intensive care unit at Western Wake. He had been unconscious

since the accident.

"He was very energetic and unassuming," said Dave Durham, vice president of John Wieland Homes, who employed Swartwood.

"I recruited him and moved him here when I came," he said. "He is the type of person you could count on every day, a cooperative, nice person. We hated to lose him."

Durham responded to rumors that Swartwood had been fired for negligent behavior, saying, "That is absolutely untrue."

He said the company is paying benefits to his family now.

The trench was about 12 feet deep and Swartwood had jumped into it to straighten some filtration fabric in

the bottom of the trench.

Swartwood was the superintendent at the construction site.

Site inspectors for the N.C. Occupational Safety and Health Administration of the Department of Labor have determined that no citations will be issued against Wieland.

According to Greg Cook, Department of Labor spokesman, "No one had been inside the trench in previous operations. The superintendent, who was the victim, was the only one who had gone into trench at any time, according to our findings."

"It was not a standard operating procedure, so there is no reason for issuing a citation," Cook said.

have gone into. I think they would attempt to do that here."

He said FedEx has its own patented design for quieting jet engines—called a "hush kit"—which it sells to other companies.

The chamber board of directors will meet April 14 to take final action.

From what we understand, it would be during off peak hours, which may lessen the impact even more," he added.

Morrisville Chamber supports FedEx hub at Raleigh Durham

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"We are also concerned about what type of message that the community is sending nationally, not just to Fed Ex but to other companies that might think about relocating to the Triangle. We must not forget what has caused our properties to increase in value, caused a low unemployment, which is somewhat insulated from the rest of the country. It's because of the industry that decided to move here. We certainly don't want to send a message nationally that we've got it so good that we don't need anyone else. We're afraid that that's what is happening."

Cary's town board has also formally opposed the location of the hub here. Durham has supported it. Raleigh's board is split and has not come to a conclusion.

"We also are very sensitive to the vote of the town council of Morrisville, and respect their decision," Bolebruch said. "We can understand why they voted that way."

He said that relations between the two boards have been good and that "Several of the town council members have said that they understand that the chamber has a different considerations to make in how they stand on the issue, because our concern is economic vitality of the area," Bolebruch said.

"They had the right to make the decision they made," concurred Mayor Pro Tem Mark Silver-Smith. "I'm disappointed, but I won't hold it against them because it was their decision."

Commissioner C.T. Moore said, "I'm proud of the chamber for making a decision not based on pressure. I've seen that happen on this board, and it doesn't work," he said.

Bolebruch added that even with the added Fed Ex flights, "we're nowhere near the number of flights that went in and out when American was at their peak."

As far as traffic is concerned, I think if you considered a 5 percent

increase in truck traffic around the airport without Fed Ex on an annual basis, you will find that Fed Ex doesn't add a whole lot to that," Bolebruch said.

"From what we understand, it would be during off peak hours, which may lessen the impact even more," he added.

Bolebruch added that he has heard that FedEx is very concerned about being a good neighbor. "They've tried to be in every community they

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