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Western Regional Jail earlier in the day. He's been held there since not long after the Tuesday, March 28, 2017 incident at an apartment at the Market Express store in Alum Creek. A West Virginia state trooper was shot during the incident.

Yeager was indicted 13 months ago by a Lincoln County grand jury. The indictment, 18-F-16, included the following counts:

- 1 felony count for attempted first degree murder
- 2 felony counts for malicious wounding
- 1 felony count for strangulation
- 2 felony counts for wanton endangerment

The Yeager allegations stem from the high profile stand off with West Virginia State Police in Alum Creek, two years ago. The Lincoln Journal was the first news outlet to report from the scene of the stand off, which unfolded in the apartment section of the Market Express store that Tuesday morning. According to the four-page indictment, Yeager is alleged to have attempted to murder State Trooper D.S. Fry with a firearm, that morning, by shooting and wounding him. The two malicious wounding counts also pertain to the shooting of Fry. The strangulation count for Yeager is for the alleged attack on a named female victim at the apartment building. The wanton endangerment counts are for firing the gun at Fry, creating a substantial risk of death or injury to another.

In court, recently, Yeager appeared with his legal counsel, Jim McCoy. The state is being represented by Lincoln County Assistant Prosecutor Jackie Stevens. The court's pre-trial efforts to date have largely centered on competency evaluations for the accused. In court on February 20, the small group present heard that two reports have now been completed.

Judge Hoke asked McCoy and Stevens if there were any other outstanding matters to be taken up other than the setting of a trial date. In response, McCoy told the court that expert witnesses involved in the evaluations would likely be called if a trial proceeded. He also indicated that there would likely be lay witnesses called.

Judge Hoke set the trial for 9:30 a.m., Monday, June 10, 2019. The judge then concluded the hearing. Yeager was allowed to spend a few minutes with his family, who were seated in the front bench of the public seating in the courtroom, around six feet from the accused during the hearing.

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put to good use at the Home of the Panthers. As previously reported in The Lincoln Journal, last fall, the large unit was purchased through grant funding and a school system matching amount. The super hot cutting beam can cut through thick metal in seconds, with the piece easily being suitable for handling right away.

At the February 26 board meeting, the students, Billy Bell, Colton Sizemore, and Josh Phillips, presented the board with an outline of West Virginia cut from a sheet of aluminum. In addition to precisely cutting the shape of the Mountain State, the students had also cut the wording Lincoln County Schools across the piece, and cut out the shape of Lincoln County. Jones told the board that the students are designing and cutting pieces for sale to the general public as a fundraiser. Superintendent Midkiff and the board voiced their deep appreciation for the presented gift.

Animal parts bill signed
By SEÁN O'DONOGHUE
Managing Editor

CHARLESTON - A freshman delegate for Lincoln County was the lead sponsor of no legislation during the current session in Charleston. That's not unusual for newly elected lawmakers. However, Delegate John Mandt (R-Cabell) saw a number of the bills he co-sponsored signed into law by Governor Jim Justice. One of the bills co-sponsored by Mandt and now approved by the executive branch will come into effect on Sunday, May 19, 2019. The bill, HB2521, related to permitting for the parts of fur-bearing animals. The purpose of the bill was to permit the selling, trading and bartering of fur-bearer parts, including carcasses for the making of lures and baits, carcass parts, including glands, skulls, claws, and bones, and fur-bearer urine, and to permit the hides and tails of squirrels to be sold, traded or bartered. The bill had the unanimous support of the five Lincoln County delegates in the lower chamber. Delegates Sean Hombuckle, Zack Maynard, Joe Jeffries, Daniel Linville, and Mandt were among the 87 yeas for the bill. Lincoln County's two senators, Ron Stollings and Paul Hardesty, voted against the bill in the Senate's 24-7 passage of the legislation. Justice signed the bill on February 28. It comes into effect on May 19.

Evaluation ordered for man accused in wife's murder

By SEÁN O'DONOGHUE
Managing Editor

HAMLIN - Pre-trial matters continued in the case of Edward Earl Jeffers, last week, the man charged with the murder of his wife, Stephanie Jeffers, in late 2017. The accused made his latest appearance in Lincoln County Circuit Court, last week. Jeffers, 31, appeared before Lincoln County Chief Circuit Court Judge Jay Hoke, Thursday morning, February 28, 2019. He was transported from the Western Regional Jail in Barboursville earlier that morning. He's been held there since December 27, 2017, a few days after the slaying of his wife.

Jeffers appeared with his legal counsel, Robby Long and Gregory Courtright. As reported in The Lincoln Journal at the time of the incident, Jeffers was charged in the death of his wife on Thursday, December 14, 2017. The domestic incident unfolded at the Highland Apartments in Hamlin. The criminal complaint described a gruesome scene and the use of a knife in the murder of Stephanie Jeffers. The indictment was based on the information of Trooper Morgan. Jeffers was indicted in September of 2018 by a Lincoln County Grand Jury on a single felony count of first degree murder.

The case was previously continued by Judge Hoke in January of 2019. Last week's pre-trial hearing was set at that time. A full jury trial was initially set for Monday, April 15, 2019. In court on February 28, the court noted a new trial date had been set for Monday, June 24, 2019. Assistant Prosecutor Jackie Stevens is handling the matter for the state.

The February 28 hearing got underway at 10:51 a.m. As has become customary, members of the deceased victim's family were in court, silently listening to the proceedings throughout.

Addressing the court, last week, Long said that the defense and the prosecution have been in discussions. He told the judge of two instances of items being sent to the wrong attorney. Accordingly, Courtright had only recently become fully involved as defense co-counsel in the matter. "Mr. Courtright hasn't had enough time," said Long, mentioning the need for his colleague to look at witness statements in particular. Long therefore sought a continuation of the case.

Long next addressed the matter of his client's mental health and whether the defense wanted to have an evaluation performed. He told Judge Hoke that he wrote to the court seeking to have court pay for an independent psychological evaluation. "We'd ask the court to consider that today," Long said, "to allow the defense to hire an independent expert to evaluate our client."

Judge Hoke acknowledged that he had received Long's letter and had read it. The judge noted that there had been mention in the record of previous mental hygiene petitions involving Jeffers. Long noted, however, that one of those had been denied on face. Continuing, Judge Hoke said that the mental hygiene aspect "immediately raises red flags to a judge" in terms of competency. He stressed, however, that Long's request for an evaluation was a separate matter.

Responding to Long, Stevens told the court that he has never had objections to competency evaluations. "I really don't have a position, other than what the court feels is appropriate," said Stevens. He noted that Jeffers had not given a statement in the wake of the incident, and had been taken to hospital from the scene. Stevens suggested, therefore, that there's not much of the kind of evidence that would support a claim of diminished capacity. Stevens clarified for the court that the hospitalization was necessary as Jeffers had his own injuries. While noting that the case was not yet before a jury, Stevens said he assumed it would be the state's contention that the significant injuries to Jeffers were self inflicted.

With regard the the defense's request for an expert's evaluation, Long said he did not believe the state would be entitled to any determination or findings from such an exercise. Judge Hoke, however, wasn't convinced, telling Long that the prosecution would get a copy. "Only if a report is generated," replied Long. Returning to his opening request that an expert's involvement be paid for, Long underscored that the defendant, just by being indigent, should not be precluded from having the services or reports of outside professionals.

Judge Hoke determined that there should be a court-ordered competency evaluation performed. He set a time limit for the delivery of such a report. He told the two sets of counsel that the outcome and report, once received, may very well lead to a further evaluation. With regard to Long's separate request for a defense acquired evaluation of his client, Judge Hoke asked that a separate order be prepared by counsel for him to consider.

Noting the trial date of June 24, the judge set a status conference for Monday, April 8 at 11:30 a.m. Court personnel, who were set the task of arranging the court-ordered evaluation, were advised to inform the service providers of the time constraints. The hearing adjourned at 11:16 a.m. with no further defense or prosecution motions. Jeffers was returned to jail later in the day.



Edward Jeffers is pictured in court last week. Standing is defense attorney Robby Long. Seated is co-counsel Gregory Courtright.

1,500 gallon tank deployed to solve Ranger Elementary water woes

By SEÁN O'DONOGHUE
Managing Editor

HAMLIN - The loss of water supply to Lincoln County's smallest school, which led to a three-day closure of the facility, was temporarily remedied with a 1,500 gallon water tank last week. Lincoln County Superintendent of Schools Jeff Midkiff addressed the school board on the topic near the end of the February 26, 2019 regular session in Hamlin.

Heavy rain led to flooding and high water in parts of Lincoln County the preceding weekend. The conditions are understood to have led to the interruption of water supply provided by the Branchland Midkiff Public Service District to Ranger and nearby parts of rural Lincoln County. The break in question was said to have been at a river crossing.

Midkiff ordered the closure of Ranger Elementary on three consecutive days, Monday, February 25, Tuesday, February 26, and Wednesday, February 27, all due to the loss of water supply. However, at the February 26 board session, Midkiff described the plan underway to fix the problem and return students to the classroom. He told the board that the school system's maintenance team were preparing to deliver a 1,500 gallon tank to the school. This would take care of the facility's toilet flushing and handwashing needs. Bottled water would be deployed for cooking and for drinking at the school, Midkiff confirmed. The superintendent voiced optimism that the school would reopen on Thursday, February 28. The tank was seen parked outside Hager's

Supply in Hamlin on Tuesday afternoon. A school board employee confirmed the tank was Ranger Elementary-bound.

In his remarks to the board earlier in the afternoon, Midkiff underscored that the central office had been in close contact with the PSD and with the Lincoln County Health Department. The superintendent also said that various options had been considered regarding the students at Ranger, including transporting them to the central office for classes or to West Hamlin Elementary or to Hamlin PK-8. Regarding the temporary tank, Midkiff told the board there was confidence it would function just as the public water supply does. The superintendent said that the tank, mounted on a dump truck, would be refilled each evening off-site. Should each toilet flush be under two gallons, the tank would be enough for over 800 trips to the bathroom by staff and students, or around six per person throughout the day.

On Wednesday morning, Branchland Midkiff PSD issued an update on the repair work. "We are working on getting a temporary line in place," the district said in the statement. The process was not going to be simple and would take time, according to the district. The update also said that an engineer and others had been working on a plan and that work would begin the same day.



The 1,500 gallon tank, pictured in Hamlin last week before being taken to Ranger.



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