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Thursday



Accomplice pleads guilty in kidnapping

By **GREG WATRY**
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SUPERIOR COURT — One of the defendants who played a role in the botched and mistaken identity kidnapping of a Newton pet supply owner entered a plea deal with the prosecution Wednesday, admitting his assistance in the scheme.

William Barger, 50, of Missouri, entered the plea before Judge Thomas J. Critchley in state Superior Court in Newton for first-degree accomplice liability for the kidnapping of Jeffrey Muller.

Sussex County First Assistant Prosecutor Gregory Mueller said Barger is facing up to a 20-year state prison sentence. He must serve 85

percent of the sentence, and upon release from incarceration will be required to be paroled for a five-year term.

Barger, who was being questioned by his attorney Jeff Patti, admitted that he was approached by Douglas Stangeland, 50, of Missouri, with the idea of kidnapping a "Jeffrey Muller," who had bilked out of money someone Stangeland knew.

Barger had allegedly started a new chapter of the Hells Angels motorcycle club in the Midwest, of which Stangeland was the anticipated vice president.

Roy Slates, 60, told Stangeland at a Missouri bar in 2009 that he had been swindled out of money by a power broker named "Jeffrey Muller." Slates offered to pay Stangeland 10

percent of whatever losses were recovered.

Barger admitted in court that he was introduced to Slates by Stangeland and agreed to take the kidnapping job for a fee.

He further admitted that he aided in planning the kidnapping, but was in Missouri during the time the kidnapping occurred in January 2010. He said he provided Stangeland, Lonnie Swarnes, 48, and Andrew Wadel, 25, with information on various Jeffrey Mullers living in the state of New Jersey.

Swarnes and Wadel were also members of the supposed motorcycle club.

While Barnes provided information of various Jeffrey

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Photo by Daniel Freel/New Jersey Herald

William Barger is escorted into state Superior Court in Newton on May 19. Barger entered a plea deal Wednesday admitting his assistance in a kidnapping scheme.

Newton rejects special district

By **BRUCE A. SCRUTON**
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NEWTON — With more than a month's worth of questions and a change of government just a month away, the Town Council on Wednesday voted down the creation of a special improvement district aimed at helping Spring Street.

The unanimous vote of the four council members present doesn't kill the creating of the district, but does leave it up to the new council that is seated on July 1 to revive the idea.

It was standing-room only for that portion of the meeting for the public hearing on the ordinance with more than two dozen people speaking and almost unanimously either panning the idea or wanting much more information about what would be done with the money gathered by the assessments on commercial properties within the district.

Of concern was what the district's plan would be; however, there is no board of directors in place — they can't be elected until after the ordinance is in effect — to create a plan. The same holds true for the question of the size of the budget of the corporation set up for the district — no ordinance, no budget.

The negative vote was suggested by Mayor Joe Ricciardo, who leaves office on June 30, after the board was told by Town Manager Thomas Russo that the ordinance could not be tabled longer than July 1.

But when he moved to defeat the ordinance, there



Photo by Daniel Freel/New Jersey Herald

Seth Grossman, president of Cooperative Professional Services, speaks about the challenges Newton would face in starting a Special Improvement District Wednesday.

was no second. Instead, Council member Dan Flynn moved to approve the ordinance, with a second from Council member Sandra Diglio, which brought shouts from the audience until they realized the council could vote "no," and the ordinance would be defeated.

There was a decided anti-government, anti-taxation feel to the meeting with many speakers, including Theresa Iliff, owner of Camp Iliff at the corner of Spring Street and Sparta Avenue, upset over rising taxes.

"I'm paying \$49,000 a year and I get a flower box," she said of plantings done on the street in front of her business. "I'm all for the town of Newton, but you need to explain hat I'm getting for it."

The first speaker was Seth Grossman, a professor at Rutgers University, who helped create Special Improvement Districts, also known as Business Improvement Districts, in New Jersey in 1984.

He said the districts are about building partnerships between government and

business and "you need to be patient with each other. This town needs to be known, needs to be welcoming, needs to be competitive."

Jonathan Andrews, owner of the Springboard Shops on Spring Street, said he came to the meeting in support of the SID, but noted there were not a lot of the non-resident business owners attending the meeting.

"If the SID can fix this, I'm for it," he said. "If it can be fixed within the existing government, that would be better."

Stanhope man killed in crash on Route 206 in Sandyston

HERALD STAFF REPORT
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SANDYSTON — A Stanhope man was killed early Wednesday morning when another driver swerved to avoid a deer and hit his vehicle head-on, state police said.

Thomas Biasi Jr., 39, was pronounced dead at the scene around 6 a.m. Wednesday, Sgt. 1st Class Gregory Williams said.

At 5:36 a.m., Ahmad Elayan, 31, of Ridgefield, was driving a white Ford Econoline van northbound on Route 206 when he saw a deer in the roadway, swerved into the southbound lane and hit a Jeep Cherokee, driven by Biasi Jr. head-on, according to Williams.

According to Williams, while

Biasi Jr. has been identified as a resident of Stanhope, his vehicle is registered in Pennsylvania.

Both vehicles overturned, resulting in Biasi Jr. being trapped in his vehicle, Williams said.

Elayan was treated at Newton Medical Center for a fractured ankle and released, Trooper Alina Spies said.

The crash occurred near the intersection of Route 206 and Struble Road, Spies said. The accident caused a closure of most of the road for almost five hours, Spies said, though cars were still able to pass through. It was fully reopened by 11 a.m.

The Sussex County Prosecutor's Office and the Morris County Medical Examiner are investigating.

Sandyston Township Volunteer Fire Department also responded to the scene.

Wednesday's accident was the fourth fatal crash in Sussex County this year and second within two weeks.

On March 15, 44-year-old Cary Mattos was struck by a vehicle driven by Thomas K. Zoschak, 60, of Dingmans Ferry, Pa., as she and her husband left the American Legion Post on Route 206 in Frankford after a dinner dance.

Zoschak was charged with leaving the scene of a motor vehicle accident resulting in death, leaving the scene of a motor vehicle accident resulting in bodily injury and assault by automobile.

On April 15, 17-year-old Joseph Paladino, of Hopatcong,



Photo by Joe Carlson/New Jersey Herald

A state Department of Transportation sign just north of Struble Road on Route 206 in Sandyston alerts motorists to a fatal accident investigation on Wednesday morning.

was killed when the car he was traveling in on the southbound side of Route 206 in Andover Township crossed the double yellow line and was struck by a pick-up truck headed north.

The third fatal accident of the year occurred May 17, when Michael Dougherty Jr., 24, of Jefferson, crashed his motorcycle into a utility pole on Canistear Road in Vernon.



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