

Murder: Hedman admitted to police he struck victim with an ax multiple times

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needed the tools for work, records stated. The two then smoked marijuana with Hedman in the afternoon.

Detectives “pinged” Martz’s cell phone near North Powder. Oregon State Police later found and arrested a man matching Hedman’s description Monday night for allegedly stealing at least one vehicle — including the victim’s — and attempting to elude law enforcement in Baker City. The court documents state Hedman confessed to police that he killed Martz “with an ax, hitting him multiple times.” He also told investigators that Martz was “still on the property.”

Hedman ran into police trouble this year when Pendleton officers the morning of June 5 responded to 916 S.W. Court Ave. for a male looking in cars and acting suspicious. Minutes

later, a patrol sergeant spotted a person matching the description of the prowler just a block to the west.

Pendleton police later confirmed the suspect was Hedman.

The sergeant tried to stop Hedman, but he took off running north. Officers had no probable cause for an arrest, so they monitored him while the sergeant viewed surveillance video at the reporting business. The police observed Hedman cross private properties, vaulting fences between, according to the police report, and one property owner wanted the cops to arrest him for trespass.

A pursuit ensued, and Hedman ducked into a property on the 300 block of Southwest Third Street. Police found him hiding there in a basement stairwell. He also had four warrants for his arrest — three out of Hermiston and one from the Umatilla County

Sheriff’s Office.

Not one of the six officers at the scene recognized Hedman, according to the report, and police information listed him as a transient from the Heppner area.

Police reported Hedman admitted to being high on heroin and had a syringe filled with a liquid. Medical staff at St. Anthony Hospital cleared Hedman before officers booked him into county jail in Pendleton for trespassing, interfering with police, third-degree escape and second-degree disorderly conduct, all misdemeanors.

The jail gave Hedman the boot on June 25 due to overpopulation. The release agreement noted his charges and a July 8 court proceeding.

Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan said data showed the jail population that day was between 228 to 230. When the population reaches those levels, he said, the jail starts running out of

mattresses, space and other resources.

Several elements play a role in who the jail selects for release, from how quickly an inmate can get in front of a judge for an arraignment to the severity of their offenses.

After working through the inmates that have court proceedings, jail staff rely on a matrix to whittle the remaining population. Rowan explained that system takes into account an inmate’s criminal history. The more serious the offense and the greater the number of offenses, the higher the score. Rowan said he has seen scores as high as 2,025 for someone with serious felonies, but an inmate with many misdemeanors might top out at 1,500.

Misdemeanors often produce scores as low as 100 or 200, Rowan said, and the lower an inmate’s score, the more likely the jail consid-

ers them for release. Hedman’s history consists of trespass and the like, Rowan said, and before now lacks assaults or other violent crimes.

State court records show Hedman also has local convictions for misdemeanors and low-level felonies going back to 2015.

He completed two years probation in Morrow County for a 2015 menacing charge. That June, he pleaded guilty to attempting to commit a Class A felony and received 30 days in jail and three years probation under community corrections.

He pleaded no contest in 2016 in Wasco County for driving while suspended, which stemmed from ignoring a speeding ticket, according to the Oregon State Police citation. And Hedman pleaded guilty in February 2019 in Morrow County Circuit Court to giving false information to

an officer and in a separate case pleaded no contest to driving uninsured.

Martz worked at Whitman for seven years and graduated with a gender and German studies degree in 2007, according to an email to staff from Whitman College President Kathy Murray.

“I am at a loss for words for how to begin to understand this and I am sure many of you feel the same way,” part of Murray’s email said.

Hedman faces Baker County charges of vehicle theft, trespass, reckless driving, criminal mischief and hit-and-run involving property. State court records show he has a hearing July 31 to enter a plea. He has no court proceedings in Walla Walla Superior Court until he leaves Oregon.

Walla Walla Union-Bulletin Reporter Emily Thornton contributed to this story.

Decision: Lack of emergency services puts rural Americans at greater risk

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that with \$923,000 in funds for the Milton-Freewater EMS, there were 1,045 call responses last year.

That comes down to approximately \$883 per response.

In nearby Athena, where its emergency services had \$441,000 in funding, White said there were 210 call responses. That equates to roughly \$2,100 per response.

The emergency medical service employees are also underpaid compared to neighboring districts, and Saager told the board he wants to see their wages brought closer to their counterparts.

In addition, many people who need ambulance rides struggle to pay the bill for it. Kilmer said the government’s cuts to reimbursement through Medicare and Medicaid have only compounded the problem by placing a larger financial burden on those riding in the ambulance.

The ambulances and equipment also need to be maintained and must be replaced every so many years. Purchasing a new ambulance can cost in the area of a \$250,000 White said.

Saager did not return calls for comment.

Funding for emergency services has been an ongoing battle in Milton-Freewater.

The ambulance district was originally voted on and established in November 2011 with more than 86% of the vote, and the expectation was the district would raise \$130,000 annually.

Prior to the establishment of the district, Saager and Milton-Freewater EMS served the area since 1984 after the fire district developed a quick-response team. By 2000, their services expanded to transporting Advanced Life Support patients.

But insufficient funding in 2011 caused Saager and the EMS to almost suspend



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Milton-Freewater Rural Fire District is attempting to secure funding for a new ambulance district.

services and kindled the discussions of forming an ambulance district. After a series of negotiations, the county helped keep the services running throughout the end of the year until the district could decide on a future provider.

After the district passed, the board opted to keep the area’s services with Saager. Then being subsidized by local property taxes, Saager and the Milton-Freewater EMS still struggled financially.

Kilmer has been a board member for the Milton-Freewater Ambulance Service Area Health District for roughly six years and said it’s been known for several years the funding was insufficient. Previous attempts to remedy it by applying for grants have failed or fell short of the district’s needs.

“I told them in their inception, ‘Be careful what you ask for because this is a permanent rate,’” said Paul Chalmers, Umatilla County tax assessor.

Eight years later, the board is seeking to dissolve its district and again must ask voters to raise the taxing rate.

“The question for them

that,” Chalmers said.

The proposed district would require the voters to pass three measures. First, to dissolve the current district. Second, to estab-

“THE ONLY WAY WE CAN SURVIVE, IN OUR OPINION, IS TO RECEIVE MORE FUNDING.”

— George White

is how will it impact other districts,” Chalmers said.

The challenge is the constraints of compression from raising the rate. With the state’s cap on collection and spending for local government services at \$10 per \$1,000, the increase will ultimately impact other services.

The difficult decision for voters will be determining how much value the district’s emergency services has while balancing this potential impact.

“It becomes a political question as to whether or not folks want to vote into

leton also offered to extend its services if needed.

While these options don’t leave Milton-Freewater unaccounted for, they could double or triple wait and travel times. Ultimately, the board would have to mull over these and other options if the measures don’t make it to the ballot or don’t pass when they do.

Either way, Milton-Freewater’s emergency services can’t sustain itself as is.

“I just want [the voters] to understand we’re at a crucial moment,” White said. “We might not survive another year.”

The district’s fight for survival is emblematic of a nationwide problem plaguing rural communities.

A 2018 National Rural Health Association policy brief stated roughly one-third of rural EMS are in “immediate operational jeopardy” due to lack of funding, staffing, and reimbursement.

For those residing in Milton-Freewater and

other rural areas, this makes the issue of survival quite literal.

The same NRHA report said rural Americans face 50% greater risk of trauma-related death as a result of limited emergency services and the longer wait and travel times associated with it. In America, one of the most common causes of trauma-related deaths are drug overdoses, and thus the rising opioid crisis exacerbates these risks.

While many EMS providers target a response time of eight minutes or less for Advanced Life Support patients, the NRHA report found rural communities face an average of 20-30% longer response times. Specifically in the case of opioid overdoses, this added average of 9.4 minutes per call is often the difference between life and death, according to the report.

“Unfortunately, these problems are not unique to Milton-Freewater,” county commissioner John Shafer said.

Shafer served on the Medic 400 board when its service area also faced funding issues and had to establish a new district that raised its rate to \$1 per \$1,000 in 2016.

For now, the next steps lie with the district board placing its future in the voter’s hands.

“It’s important that we get it onto the ballot,” county commissioner George Murdock said.

The Milton-Freewater Ambulance Service Area Health District plans to present its proposal for approval at the city council meeting on Aug. 12, which will take place at 7 p.m. inside the Albee room at the library.

The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners also will hold a public hearing Friday, July 26, where the new district’s proposed boundaries will be confirmed. Then, a second hearing where the commissioners can officially refer the issue to the ballot will be held on Aug. 16.

Bill: One of the last bills passed was also one of the more important

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will put its trade programs in one place. The center will have space to train electricians and plumbers, as well as students studying fire sciences and emergency medical operations.

And Treasure Valley Community College will get \$4.9 million to build a facility to train nurses and other health care workers.

The state Department of Administrative Services had \$24 million carved out in HB 5006 to buy a former Microsoft building in Wilsonville. It’s something the state has

had its eye on, DAS spokeswoman Liz Craig said.

The building comes with office, warehouse and laboratory space.

Right now, a specific purpose isn’t outlined.

“We believe the building could solve a number of space needs for various agencies, including lab space and secure storage, in a central location,” Craig said.

DAS expects to decide whether to buy the building by the end of the year.

While some dollars go to fund new projects, much of the funding will improve existing buildings.

The Oregon Youth Authority received \$6.4 million to fund four projects, the bulk going to upgrading medical and dental clinics at the Tillamook Youth Correctional Facility, MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility and Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility.

Right now, the Oak Creek and Tillamook facilities don’t have space for a dentist to come in, so youths have to be taken off campus for dental work. An expansion of the facilities will allow dentists to come on-site, agency spokeswoman Sarah Evans said.

The expansion of the medical clinics at Oak Creek and Tillamook will provide quicker access to services. At Oak Creek, the space is currently so tight that it limits how often doctors can come visit.

“Both are just so small,” Evans said. “If you look at an exam room, you don’t even have room to fit a doctor, nurse and a youth all in the room at the same time.”

MacLaren will get \$1.8 million to upgrade its infirmary, clinic and pharmacy. Evans said these services were in an old building and the new one will be better

suited to dealing with sick people.

“If you walk into a place that’s cold, old and run-down looking, it’s not going to make you feel better,” she said.

Several Salem buildings are getting upgrades through the Oregon Military Department. Almost \$10 million is dedicated to improving Army Aviation Support facilities in Salem and Pendleton. The buildings will be seismically retrofitted and receive backup generators.

The Oregon Supreme Court building will get a seismic upgrade, along with

other renovations and energy-efficiency upgrades, using \$28 million in state funds.

The Oregon Department of Corrections got more than \$47 million to upgrade radios, cameras and building maintenance. The department is also going to use \$1.6 million to upgrade the software it uses to track inmates. The software now in use today was developed in the 1980s, according to testimony submitted to the Legislature, and is the black-screen-green-font sort of software now mostly seen in decades-old movies.