

Smith to go to state hospital for testing

Judge finds reason to doubt mental fitness

By Kyle Spurr
EO Media Group

A Clatsop County Circuit Court judge ordered accused murderer Jessica Smith be sent to the Oregon State Hospital to determine if she is mentally ill or faking her behavior.

Judge Cindee Matyas found there is reason to doubt Smith's mental fitness to proceed based on her recent suicide attempt and an inconclusive report from a court-appointed psychologist.

The judge ordered Smith stay at the state hospital for up to a month to be evaluated and observed. A court hearing that was scheduled for later this month was canceled.

After the hospital stay, Smith will be transferred back to Clatsop County Jail. A status hearing is scheduled for late May.

Judge Matyas previously said in court that she has not observed any unusual behavior from Smith, but still appointed psychologist Brooke Howard to do an independent



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Jessica Smith is led into the Clatsop County Courthouse for a status hearing in March.

evaluation after considering a defense expert's claims that Smith has severe mood changes, abstract thinking and reasoning and untreated mental health issues.

Howard determined Smith suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, but could not conclude whether she is unable or unwilling to aid and assist in her defense.

In her report, Howard recommended Smith be sent to the state hospital for observation.

Both the prosecution and defense have also requested

Smith be transferred to the state hospital, but under different terms. Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis requested Howard re-evaluate Smith at the state hospital. Defense lawyers David Falls and Lynne Morgan asked the court to send Smith for treatment, which would take much longer than an evaluation.

Marquis warned in court that if Smith is sent for an indefinite stay for treatment, the clock starts ticking, and after three years the defense can move to dismiss the case.

Smith's mental fitness to proceed is ultimately up to Judge Matyas.

The judge will use the report from a certified evaluator at the state hospital to help determine Smith's mental state.

The report is expected to uncover whether Smith suffers from a mental disease or defect, and if she is able to understand the nature of the court proceedings. If she is found to lack the fitness to proceed, the report will offer a recommendation for treatment and services to restore her capacity.

If the state hospital examination cannot be conducted due to Smith's unwillingness, Matyas ordered, the report should offer an opinion as to whether the unwillingness was a result of a mental disease.

Matyas further ordered that the report should not make findings or conclusions regarding Smith's mental state during the alleged crimes.

Smith, 42, of Vancouver, Washington, is accused of murdering her toddler and attempting to kill her teenager at a Cannon Beach resort in 2014.

The trial is scheduled for June 2017.

Rescued Gearhart turtle dies despite medical care

By Lyra Fontaine
Cannon Beach Gazette



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Thunder, an olive ridley turtle, died despite rehabilitation efforts.

A rescued olive ridley sea turtle, found comatose and hypothermic near Gearhart in December, died while completing her final rehabilitation stage before summer release into the wild, the Oregon Coast Aquarium reported Wednesday, April 13.

Marine life experts at SeaWorld's Animal Rescue Center discovered the turtle in her rehabilitation pool Tuesday morning.

The turtle, named "Thunder" and known for being particularly large and strong, was rescued after washing ashore on Del Rey Beach after severe storms.

Thunder and another rehabilitated sea turtle named "Lightning," found in Pacific City, were flown to SeaWorld in March from the Oregon Coast Aquarium, which initially cared for the turtles after their December strandings and rescues.

"Thunder didn't appear to be in that bad of shape, but you never know what causes them to strand until they've been treated," said Laura Todd, a U.S. Fish & Wildlife field supervisor in Newport,

adding that several olive ridley turtles have been successfully returned to the wild after treatment in Newport. "In this case, we thought she was going to make it."

However, Thunder's problems became more apparent after the move to SeaWorld.

An initial necropsy showed that Thunder may have had internal organ injuries, including in the liver and heart, that contributed to her death. She also had stopped eating for some time, which may have been a symptom of a larger issue, Todd said. An official necropsy report is not yet complete.

Oregon Coast Aquarium, where Thunder was cared for and rehabilitated, is "very upset" about the turtle's death, Todd said.

Firefighters extinguish pickup truck inferno

Sunday afternoon, a pickup truck went up in flames in midtown. Volunteers, firefighters and police helped to put out the blaze.



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