



DANNY MILLER/EO MEDIA GROUP

Jessica Smith appeared in Clatsop County Circuit Court with her lawyers for a hearing Tuesday on her mental fitness.

Judge rules Jessica Smith competent to stand trial

Ruling comes after Oregon State Hospital report

By Kyle Spurr
EO Media Group

A Clatsop County Circuit Court judge determined Tuesday that accused murderer Jessica Smith is competent to stand trial.

Judge Cindee Matyas accepted an Oregon State Hospital report that concluded Smith is able to aid and assist in her defense.

Matyas had said in previous court hearings she did not observe any unusual behavior from Smith, but still found reason to doubt her mental fitness to proceed based on a suicide attempt in jail and an inconclusive report from court-appointed psychologist Brooke Howard.

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

The psychologist recommended Smith be sent to the state hospital, where she was observed and evaluated in May. The 64-page report from the state hospital was sent to the court on Friday.

Based on the state hospital's findings, Smith's defense lawyers Lynne Morgan and William Falls withdrew their request for a hearing to determine her fitness to proceed.

Smith, 42, of Vancouver, Washington, is accused of murdering her toddler and attempting to kill her teenager at a Cannon Beach resort in 2014. She remains in custody in Clatsop County Jail, where she is off suicide watch and in a regular jail cell.

At the court hearing Tuesday, District Attorney Josh Marquis requested Clatsop County Jail Dr. Roy Little be allowed to

review the reports from the state hospital and court-appointed psychologist to assist in Smith's care while she awaits trial in June 2017.

Allowing jail staff to review inmate medical records is important for other ailments such as diabetes or hepatitis C, Marquis said. As an example, Marquis noted Smith has complained of severe back problems.

Smith's defense lawyers initially objected to Dr. Little reviewing the reports. "Ms. Smith was on suicide watch, she was in dire conditions," Morgan said. "It was our view that whatever we could do to get her the help she needed was appropriate, but things have changed."

After consulting with the doctor privately Tuesday, the defense lawyers agreed to open the records to him.

The reports and evaluations remain sealed to the public.

Smith is due back in court next month for pretrial hearings.

Don't touch seal pups on the beach

It's harbor seal pupping season

By Lyra Fontaine
Cannon Beach Gazette



SUBMITTED PHOTO

It is peak time for harbor seal pups to show up alone on Oregon beaches.

The Seaside Aquarium has received at least a dozen reports this spring of baby harbor seals spotted on the beach, general manager Keith Chandler said.

The first seal pups were spotted in late April. The harbor seal pupping season is usually from April through August, Tiffany Boothe, of the Seaside Aquarium, said.

Although the baby seals might look cute or lonely, beachgoers should give them space and not touch them. They can report the seal sighting to the Seaside Aquarium at 503-738-6211. The aquarium then posts signs around the seal so it can rest.

"We try to get out and put signs around them to get people to just leave it alone, because the beach is where they live," Chandler said. "It's like their bedroom."

A harbor seal pup on the Seaside beach.

The harbor seal pups are typically not stranded, but waiting to be cared for and fed by their mothers — who are likely waiting for human activity to clear out before returning to shore.

"They try to go to an isolated place where there are colonies of seals, but sometimes they can't plan where they are born," Chandler said.

After harbor seals are weaned from maternal care and catch their own food, they may often come ashore to rest on land.

In whale news, the aquarium received a report that some orcas recently went to Tillamook Bay, Chandler said. While most orcas are located near Vancouver Island, a group of transient orcas "cruise up and down the coast" and feed on marine mammals.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Monday, June 21
Seaside School District, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin St.

Tuesday, July 5
Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District, 6 p.m., Fire-Rescue Main Station, 188 Sunset Ave.

Tuesday, July 12
Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Tuesday, Aug. 2
Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Monday, Aug. 8
Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District, 6 p.m., Fire-Rescue Main Station, 188 Sunset Ave.

Tuesday, Aug. 9
Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Tuesday, Sept. 6
Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

Monday, Sept. 12
Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District, 6 p.m., Fire-Rescue Main Station, 188 Sunset Ave.

Tuesday, Sept. 13
Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

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