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Hearing scheduled for man accused of killing 2-year-old boy

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CHARLESTON — No trial date was set Thursday, but a hearing was scheduled at which pretrial motions might be announced in the case against a man accused of killing his girlfriend's 2-year-old son.

During a brief court hearing for Jamie L. Thomasson, prosecuting and defense attorneys agreed that another status hearing in the case would be needed for more scheduling. Thomasson's attorney said pretrial motions from the defense can be expected, but a review of police reports and other prosecution evidence will have to take place first.

Thomasson, 30, of Springfield is charged with first-degree murder and aggravated battery of a child for allegedly injuring Holden Jones in Charleston on June 20. Police have said Thomasson stayed part of the time with Amy Bennett, Holden's mother, at her Charleston residence on Union Street and was baby-sitting Holden when the boy died.

Thursday's court hearing consisted mostly of State's Attorney Steve Ferguson providing the defense with what he said was the last of the evidence the prosecution had to disclose, which is a legal requirement. The materials consisted of a pathology report on Holden's death along with interview transcripts and police reports, Ferguson said.

Circuit Judge Teresa Righter then asked defense attorney Mark Wykoff if the defense planned to file any motions before Thomasson's trial is scheduled. Wykoff replied that it was likely but added that the defense wanted to review the reports and other materials first, prompting his suggestion for another status hearing, which Righter scheduled for Sept. 16.

Thomasson pleaded not guilty to the charges during a hearing on July 9 after Righter ruled that police testimony about the investigation into Holden's death was sufficient to link Thomasson to a possible crime.

The testimony indicated that an autopsy showed that Holden's collarbone was broken in a way indicating that his arm was grabbed and jerked violently and brain contusions and other injuries indicated "severe shaking."

When Thomasson was questioned, he first said Holden fell out of bed but later said he was "playing rough" with the boy, used a wrestling move and threw him onto an air mattress several times, according to the testimony. Thomasson said Holden at one point bounced off the mattress and hit his head on a nearby piece of furniture.

Thomasson said he tried to revive Holden a few times overnight, which included shaking him, but found him dead the next morning, testimony indicated.

Also, Thomasson allegedly told a jail cellmate he "did everybody a favor" because Holden's death meant Bennett would no longer have to associate with Jason Jones, Holden's father. The cellmate also reportedly told police that Thomasson repeatedly referred to Holden by a vulgarity that meant he thought the boy wasn't tough enough.

Thomasson remains jailed without bond and a conviction for either offense with which he's charged would require prison time.

The charges against him include allegations that the acts were "exceptionally brutal or heinous," and that Thomasson was an adult who killed a child younger than 12. Those are factors a jury would have to find if Thomasson were to receive a sentence beyond the normal maximum.

For the murder charge, for instance, Thomasson could receive a life sentence or more than the usual 60-year maximum if he's convicted and a jury finds that the factors apply. The death penalty could also be possible but Ferguson would first have to go on record before trial that he plans to seek that sentence.

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