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Next steps in Pike case are uncertain



Photographs are set up in memory of Colleen Slemmer, the woman Christa Pike was convicted of murdering 1995, on Sept. 30, the day of Pike's was scheduled to be executed at a Tennessee prison. DENNY SIMMONS/NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN

Inmate may face the possibility of second execution attempt

Amanda Lee Myers
USA TODAY

With the astonishing news that Christa Pike is conscious, talking and making a “medically unprecedented” recovery following her botched execution, Tennessee is now facing a critical question: Will the state try to kill her again?

“Against all odds, Christa Pike is conscious, speaking, and continues to receive critical medical care,” her attorneys said in a statement on Oct. 6. “Her prognosis remains unclear but, at a minimum, we expect a long recovery.”

They said that despite “severe damage” to Pike’s arms, “she is still handcuffed and shackled to the bed.”

“She survived two complete rounds



Pike

of lethal injection per Tennessee’s protocol, despite her attorneys’ warning to the state of specific challenges with her veins,” her attorneys said. “She is the only person known to have survived a complete execution attempt in the U.S. Christa is a survivor and will take recovery one day at a time.”

So far, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee has not responded to repeated calls from Pike’s attorneys and death penalty observers to commute her sentence to life in prison. That leaves open the possibility that Pike will face a second execution, even after her attorneys said the first attempt on Sept. 30 amounted to unconstitutionally cruel and unusual

punishment.

“We’re in uncharted territory,” said Robin Maher, executive director of the nonprofit Death Penalty Information Center, which does not take a stance on the death penalty.

“The U.S. Supreme Court has not decided whether a second execution attempt would violate the constitution since 1947,” Maher told USA TODAY. “These are questions that have never needed to be asked before and no one knows the answers.”

Tennessee was supposed to execute Pike, 50, by lethal injection on Sept. 30 for the brutal and prolonged 1995 murder of 19-year-old Colleen Slemmer. The execution failed after Pike survived

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Town hall meeting to address complaints

Julie Garisto
Leesburg Daily Commercial
USA TODAY NETWORK

There’s been a shakeup in one of Lake County’s littlest and most idyllic communities.

The Town of Astatula will hold a public workshop on Thursday, Oct. 8, to address a recent state oversight report and growing community concerns regarding local governance.

The informational meeting will focus on the Sept. 30 letter and report from the Florida DOGE (the Department of Government Efficiency), a task force established by Gov. Ron DeSantis to investigate spending and operational vulnerabilities in municipal governments.

According to the town, the workshop is designed to provide residents and the media with factual information, documentation and formal responses to the state’s allegations.

State of Florida oversight findings

Astatula, located south of Tavares and east of Howey-in-the-Hills, has around 2,400 to 2,500 residents and encompasses roughly 3.2 square miles.

Typically, things are more laid-back. The Florida DOGE report has sparked long comment threads in Astatula Facebook and Nextdoor groups, highlighting several critical issues within the town’s administration:

● **Conflicts of interest:** The state’s findings named the mayor, alleging that he voted on municipal matters that involved his personal financial interests.

● **Fiscal mismanagement:** The review pointed to severe spending vulnerabilities and a lack of general fiscal oversight.

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What does Brightline’s bankruptcy mean for future expansion plans?

Clayton Park
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Now that Brightline is under Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, does the high-speed passenger railroad still plan to add future stations in Brevard County and the Treasure Coast and extend its line to Tampa?

For now, the answer appears to still

be yes.

The Chapter 11 filing only involved the parent entities for Brightline. Excluded were its real estate development arm in Florida, the entity that actually operates the nation’s largest private passenger railroad, and Brightline West, the entity involved in developing a railroad line that will run from Las Vegas to Southern California.

But much regarding all three depends on whether Brightline can continue to grow its revenues and ridership numbers, as well as secure the additional federal funding it needs to cover the costs of its planned future expansion.

Brightline officials did not respond to USA TODAY Network-Florida’s request for comment.

What’s the status of Brightline’s planned stations in Cocoa and Stuart?

In August, U.S. Rep. Mike Haridopolis, a Republican who represents the Congressional district that includes Brevard and Indian River counties as

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