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Troy home held explosives before fire that killed 3

BY MADISON LAMMERT
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Thousands of pounds of explosive devices were recovered from the site of the Easter Sunday home explosion and fire that killed three people in Troy.

That's a new detail Madison County Assistant State's Attorney Audrey Paulda shared in a court hearing Tuesday. She argued Colton Cissell, the 22-year-old man accused of causing

the explosion by manufacturing explosive materials in the home, should remain in jail until his trial.

Associate Judge John Hackett granted the prosecutor's request, despite the defense's assertion that injuries Colton Cissell sustained in the blast make it impossible for him to endanger anyone.

The explosion occurred late April 5 at 8004 W. Kirsch Road, the home the Cissells rented. Madeleine I. Maxeiner, 18, of

Troy; Ayden R. Hendrickson, 19, of Collinsville; and Paisley Nishwitz, 12, of Troy, died of smoke inhalation and were "burned beyond recognition," Paulda said Tuesday.

Colton Cissell was charged last month with six felony offenses: three counts of involuntary manslaughter; possession of explosives or explosive or incendiary devices; endangering the life or health of a child; and possession of explosive material without a license.



JOSHUA CARTER Belleville News-Democrat

Colton Cissell, who is charged with three counts of involuntary manslaughter, looks at his defense attorney as the court denies his release during his pre-trial detention hearing on June 2, 2026 at the Madison County Criminal Justice Center.

Cissell's father, Kenneth R. Cissell, 48, and stepmother, Roberta D. Cissell, 43, were both charged with endangering

the life of a child, alleging they allowed the manufacture of

SEE EXPLOSION, 3A



JOSHUA CARTER Belleville News-Democrat

Laura Schaefer stands inside her native plant garden in Millstadt on June 3, 2026. In addition to fighting Stage IV cancer, Schaefer also withstood citations from the city, which claimed her native plant garden violated regulations on weed and grass length.

Property-rights group cites 'Garden Act' in Millstadt dispute

BY KATIE GRAWITCH
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When Laura Schaefer bought the vacant lots next to her home in Millstadt six years ago, they were a sea of grass with a couple of old pecan trees.

Now, they contain Schaefer's prized possession: a half-acre garden bursting with native plants and vegetables that the village threatened to remove last week.

Schaefer said the garden was a boon to her health when she battled Stage IV cancer last

year. "One of the things that was suggested was to exercise through chemo, that exercise actually fights fatigue," Schaefer said. "It is my gym, it is my temple, it is my therapy, it provides me nutritious food — It's just everything to me to have it

out here." An officer with the Millstadt Police Department issued Schaefer a warning last Tuesday for violating the village's code regulating "rank vegetable growth over one-foot in

SEE GARDEN ACT, 4A

Man sentenced after crash that killed baby in East St. Louis

BY LEXI CORTES
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A wrong-way driver fleeing authorities who crashed into a family's car, killing their 8-

month-old baby in the back seat, was sentenced to prison during a plea hearing Tuesday.

Rashad Alston, 29, of St. Louis, pleaded guilty to reckless homicide, a Class 3 felony; leaving the scene of an accident

involving death, a Class 4 felony; and leaving the scene of an accident involving injury, a Class 4 felony.

St. Clair County Associate Judge Jeff Watson sentenced him to eight years in prison,

with credit for the time served. The fatal crash happened Saturday, July 2, 2022.

Parents Tanisha Smith, 38, and Percy Bean Jr., 35, were getting onto Interstate 255 at the State Street on-ramp in East St. Louis at about 6:30 a.m. when their vehicle was hit head-on by a car exiting the highway in the wrong direction. Their baby, Marquest Bean,

SEE FATAL CRASH, 3A

Cahokia school district, union reach tentative agreement

BY MADISON LAMMERT AND WILL BAUER
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After going without a contract for an entire school year, the Cahokia Federation of Teachers and the school district have reached a tentative agreement.

Cahokia School District 187 and the union, which represents teachers, service employees and secretaries, reached a four-year deal Tuesday night, according to Ray Roskos, the Illinois Federation of Teachers field service worker who's assisting with the negotiations.

The tentative deal, which still needs to be ratified by the union's full membership at the end of this month and the school board, comes amid the union's of financial mismanagement and corruption against district leadership. "This tentative contract demonstrates our mutual dedication to supporting the professionals who play a vital role in the success of our schools and the well-being of our students," Superintendent Curtis McCall Jr. said in a statement. "The contract provides employees with competitive pay and will help the district recruit and retain qualified teachers and education support personnel, while preserving the district's excellent financial standing."

McCall did not respond to requests for further comment. It's expected that the union will vote June 24, Roskos said. Typically, the school board will vote after the union.

The deal came together after the first meeting with a federal mediator Tuesday night that lasted four hours. The mediator was enlisted after many attempts at the bargaining table had not produced a compromise throughout the year.

"We really took the process seriously," Roskos said. "We ultimately made some really, really tough decisions, as far as

SEE CONTRACT, 3A



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