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Judge OKs request to preserve scene of fatal Millville fire

Joseph P. Smith
Cherry Hill Courier-Post
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

An estate attorney and the father of two girls killed in the fire April 9 on the 300 block of South 4th Street in Millville has secured a temporary ban on any demolition or similar work at the scene.

On July 3, Cumberland County Superior Court Judge James Swift signed an order blocking on-scene work for 120 days. The idea is to preserve potential evidence pending completion of any investigations, with the law firm representing the family intending to do its own analysis.

Attorney Melissa Baxter, representing the family, filed the request with the court May 28.

The order was signed after representatives of the City of Millville, South Jersey Gas and Atlantic City Electric

ABOVE AND LEFT: A fire on April 9 destroyed or badly damaged houses and killed two girls on the 300 block of South 4th Street in Millville. A state judge on July 3 ordered that no demolition or utility repairs be done in order to preserve any evidence.

PHOTOS BY JOSEPH P. SMITH/
CHERRY HILL COURIER-POST

See FIRE, Page 2A

Ex-assistant principal says Cherry Hill dismissal was ‘retaliation’

Kaitlyn McCormick
Cherry Hill Courier-Post
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

In front of Cherry Hill school officials, legal counsel and hopeful students and parents, former Cherry Hill High School East Assistant Principal David Francis-Maurer spoke publicly for the first time following his termination.

On July 7, Francis-Maurer attended a Donaldson hearing, which is an opportunity for non-renewed staff to speak to their school board in support of their renewal. He read from a prepared statement regarding his experience with the district over the last school year, one that he claims resulted in his dismissal as “retaliation” for problems and other shortcomings he had addressed within the last academic year.

In May, the un-tenured educator said, he was informed that his contract would not be renewed, and soon afterward he was placed on administrative leave, instructed not to contact staff or students.

Many students from Cherry Hill High School East, especially those in the class of 2027, which Francis-Maurer oversaw, have been expressing their love for the former assistant principal, citing him as someone who was actively involved in extra curriculars and a “breath of fresh air on a bad day” at school.

“Behind the scenes,” Francis-Maurer said in front of the board members, “I was actively marginalized and retaliated against for raising concerns that I believe put student safety, staff well-being and professional standards at risk.”

“Beginning September 2024, I was told repeatedly to leave my identities at the door,” Francis-Maurer, who has had the support of his husband throughout the ordeal, added.

See DISMISSAL, Page 2A

Ex-sheriff granted venue change in suit against Gloucester County

Joseph P. Smith
Cherry Hill Courier-Post
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

A lawsuit from former Gloucester County Sheriff Jonathan Sammons over alleged mistreatment of himself and his staff by county officials is staying alive,

but will be fought out in Atlantic County Superior Court.

Gloucester County Superior Court Judge Benjamin Morgan signed an order July 3 transferring the case out of Gloucester County. This was as requested by attorneys for Sammons.

Attorneys for county government

and county Administrator Chad Bruner, the only individual defendant at this point, had opposed the venue change request.

County attorneys immediately filed a motion in Atlantic County Superior Court to have the lawsuit dismissed. Judge Sarah Johnson has advised the

motion will be decided on August 1.

The dismissal request argues that Sammons was not an employee of the county, but an elected official, and therefore has no legal basis to make his claims.

See LAWSUIT, Page 2A

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