

CRIME AND COURT

Hermes gets 15 years for sexual assault

JAKOB GURLEY

HALLETTSVILLE — A Lavaca County jury convicted Noah Hermes on two counts of sexual assault last week following a trial stemming from an August 2022 incident. Visiting Judge Martha Jamison presided over jury selection Monday, with testimony beginning after the jury was seated. Hermes was returned to Lavaca County to face two counts of aggravated sexual assault while serving an eight-year prison sentence. The jury ultimately found him guilty Sept. 2

of two lesser-included offenses of sexual assault. Hermes elected to have the judge determine his punishment. On Thursday, Jamison sentenced him to 15 years in prison on one count and five years on the second. The 15-year sentence will run consecutively to the eight-year sentence Hermes is currently serving, while the five-year sentence will run concurrently with the other sentences. Hermes faced a punishment range of two to 20 years in prison and was not eligible for probation,

according to the Lavaca County District Attorney's Office. He will also be required to register as a sex offender for life. The 15-year sentence will not begin until Hermes completes his current eight-year sentence or is released on parole. He must serve at least half of the 15-year sentence before becoming eligible for parole on that sentence, according to prosecutors. The offenses occurred Aug. 1, 2022. Assistant County Attorney Matthew Jirkovsky and Tina Richardson of the Texas Attorney Gen-

eral's Office prosecuted the case. Richardson and her team became involved in the prosecution in 2023. The team included Sgt. Victoria McMain, Sgt. Brian Seales, Sgt. Angie Shawhan, Jacob Boos and Lori Carter. According to the District Attorney's Office, the case initially presented significant evidentiary and investigative challenges. Prosecutors conducted additional investigation and reviewed numerous criminal complaints involving Hermes before presenting the case to the jury. The office also credit-

ed personnel at Norma's House and Noella Hill, a sexual assault nurse examiner, with preserving evidence and information in the immediate aftermath of the assault. "Their work was an important part of ensuring that evidence and information remained available as the case moved forward," the office said. The conviction marked Hermes' second trial this year, according to prosecutors.

Jakob Gurley is a multimedia journalist with the Victoria Advocate. He can be reached at jakob.gurley@vicad.com.



A jury convicted Hermes on two counts of sexual assault following a trial stemming from an August 2022 offense. (Lavaca County Sheriff's Department)

COMMUNITY



Members of Stroman High School's Class of 1991 gather Saturday during the Mega Reunion at Z Venue. The event reunited alumni from graduating classes spanning 1969 to 2000. (Katie Steinhauer/Victoria Advocate)

ALWAYS A RAIDER

Stroman alumni reunite to celebrate school legacy

KATIE STEINHAUER

From 1965 until its doors closed as a traditional high school in 2002, Stroman

High School was a source of Raider pride in Victoria. Though the campus was later reconfigured as a middle school, the spirit of Raider

Nation remained strong — and Saturday, generations of alumni came together to celebrate it. "We did the Stroman

memory walk today, and it was very emotional," said Cynthia Nelms, NF Promo-

SEE ALUMNI, A3



Stroman High School alumni gather Saturday during a reunion celebrating decades of memories, friendships and school pride. (Katie Steinhauer/Victoria Advocate)

FINANCE

Victoria council faces final budget, tax votes

ADVOCATE STAFF

The Victoria City Council will consider final approval of a \$241.7 million budget and property tax rate today, completing the city's annual budget process ahead of the start of the new fiscal year. The council will meet at 5 p.m. at City Council Chambers, 107 W. Juan Linn St. in Victoria. Council members will hold separate public hearings on the proposed fiscal year 2027 budget and the city's 2026-27 property tax rate before taking final action.

The proposed budget totals \$241,709,867 and would take effect Oct. 1. Council members previously advanced the spending plan during their Sept. 1 meeting, when the budget and tax rate received unanimous approval on first reading. No residents spoke during the public hearings at that meeting. The budget ordinance is scheduled for its second and third readings late afternoon.

The council will also consider final approval of a property tax rate of \$0.4538 per \$100 of assessed valuation. The proposed rate would generate an estimated \$20.6 million for maintenance and operations and about \$8.8 million for debt service.

Combined, the city expects to collect approximately \$29.4 million in property taxes. That is about \$711,000 less than the previous year, according to figures presented during the earlier budget process.

Maintenance and operations collections are projected to increase by about

\$121,000 because of new property added to the tax rolls, while debt-service collections are expected to decrease by approximately \$833,000. The tax-rate ordinance is scheduled for its second and third readings today as well. Council members must also separately vote to ratify the property tax revenue reflected in the budget. The city's fiscal year 2027 spending plan funds municipal operations and capital projects across multiple departments. Among the issues considered during this year's budget process was the city's planned stormwater utility, which is intended to provide a dedicated funding source for drainage maintenance and improvements. As part of the consent agenda today, the council will also consider adopting the fiscal year 2026-27 budget for the Victoria Sales Tax Corporation. After the budget and tax matters, the council is scheduled to meet in executive session on several issues. One item allows the council to discuss economic development negotiations and possible financial or other incentives for an unidentified business prospect considering locating, remaining or expanding in or near Victoria. The council may also meet behind closed doors to discuss the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property and consult with the city attorney about pending or contemplated litigation or other legal matters.

INSIDE

Democratic leaders fail to confront antisemitism

VIEWPOINTS, A4



TWC marks 30 years of serving Texas, A2

GAS PRICES

SPEEDY STOP

2009 Houston Highway, Victoria

(As of 10:15 a.m. Monday. Prices subject to change.)

REGULAR:

\$3.58

DIESEL:

\$5.25

INSIDE

- A1 MAIN
- A2 ACROSS TEXAS
- A3 ... WEATHER/OBITUARIES
- A4 VIEWPOINTS
- A5 SPORTS
- A6 COMICS
- A7 DIVERSIONS
- A8 CLASSIFIEDS

Subscribe 361-574-1200 Report News 361-580-NEWS

