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The Parkersburg News and Sentinel

\$1.00 www.newsandsentinel.com WEDNESDAY, DEC. 17, 2025

Judge denies bond for Knight in fatal shooting case

By **BRETT DUNLAP**
Staff Reporter

PARKERSBURG — Bond was denied for a Parkersburg man accused of murder and attempted murder in a shooting incident last week in south Parkersburg.

Butch Wayne Knight appeared for a bond hearing Tuesday in the court of Wood County Circuit Judge Jason Wharton.

The 18-year-old Parkersburg man is accused of shooting two people in south Parkersburg on Monday, Dec. 8, with a third potential victim who was not hit during an incident on Bel-

“Given those charges...we would ask the court to hold him without bond. That is based on the severity of the things in this matter.”
Wood County Prosecutor Pat Lefebure

mont Road.

Knight has been charged with one count of first-degree murder in addition to two counts of attempted murder, upgraded from his original charges of three counts of attempted murder. The change in charges came after one of the victims, Bradi Florence, succumbed last Thursday to the injuries he sustained in the incident.

“Given those charges...we

would ask the court to hold him without bond,” Wood County Prosecutor Pat Lefebure said. “That is based on the severity of the things in this matter.”

Lefebure said the incident occurred around Southwood Park in a residential area near Gihon Elementary School at a time when school was about to be let out.

“He ultimately fired his weapon eight times striking

(Florence) in the back of the head area as well as in the leg and (another victim) in the back shoulder area,” he said. “One other victim who was in the vehicle was not struck at that time.”

Knight went to the area with the knowledge the victim would be there, Lefebure said, adding there was evidence Knight went there to confront Florence. Witness statements and video surveillance showed Knight was dropped off from a vehicle about a block away and walking to where the victims’ vehicle was located.



Defense Attorney Angela Brunicardi Doss, left, sits with Butch Wayne Knight during a bond hearing Tuesday in the court of Wood County Circuit Judge Jason Wharton. Bond was denied for Knight who is accused of murder and attempted murder from a shooting incident last week in south Parkersburg.

■ SEE KNIGHT, PAGE 10A



Gov. Patrick Morrisey, left, and Department of Human Services Secretary Alex Mayer, right, take questions from the press Tuesday about a proposed revolving investment fund to improve and expand in-state foster care facilities to begin bringing foster care children placed in out-of-state facilities back to West Virginia.

Renovate & Repair

Morrisey to create fund to help to bring home foster children, improve facilities

By **STEVEN ALLEN ADAMS**
Staff Reporter

CHARLESTON — Gov. Patrick Morrisey announced a plan to bring home the hundreds of West Virginia foster children in out-of-state placement by creating a fund to improve existing foster facilities and construct new facilities.

Morrisey and state Department of Human Services (DoHS) Cabinet Secretary Alex Mayer held a press conference Tuesday morning at the State Capitol Building to propose a new revolving investment fund to renovate state-owned foster care facilities and enhance in-state treatment capacity.

“What we want to do is we want to create a new revolving investment fund in order to make sure we’re building out some of the existing state-owned facilities, and that those dollars are going to be used to renovate and repair existing state properties, by providing high

“Progress does not mean the work is finished. It does not mean that the system is perfect, and it certainly does not mean the challenges facing children, families and frontline staff have disappeared, What this progress does mean is that we have begun to lay a foundation strong enough to support sustained change. Change that can now accelerate at an exponential rate.”
Department of Human Services Secretary Alex Mayer

acuity psychiatric, neural developmental, and trauma services for kids in West Virginia,” Morrisey said. “We’re also going to be furthering treatment programs that match the clinical profiles of our kids.”

According to the DoHS Child Welfare Dashboard, there are 5,960 children in the state’s foster care system, with 543 foster children - or 9.11% - in out-of-state placement. According to Morrisey,

the cost to taxpayers for one out-of-state placement is \$156,000 per child on average.

Morrisey said he is working with lawmakers on legislation to create the revolving investment fund, which will need \$6 million to get started. But Morrisey said the savings by bringing West Virginia’s foster children home from out-of-state placement would be deposited into the new revolving investment fund.

“As you put money in to refurbish the facilities, and you bring people home, we think we can actually save money as a result, and then we can reinvest it back into the program with the goal of eventually eliminating out of state placements,” Morrisey said. “That needs to be our goal, and we need to be very aggressive about that. If you have reductions in those out-of-state placements, that’s more money for investment here in West Virginia.”

According to statistics provided by DoHS, there have been modest improvements in foster care and child welfare numbers. These include 1,100 adoptions completed over the last year, described as “one of the highest totals on record” by Morrisey; a monthly decrease in child removals from an average of 365 in 2024 to 324 in 2025, and a 37% decrease in substance use-related child removals.

■ SEE FOSTER, PAGE 3A

North Central Regional Jail order issued

CHARLESTON — The Public Service Commission of West Virginia has issued an order to prevent a connection between the water systems of West Union and Pennsboro to avoid risking the water system to the North Central Regional Jail in Doddridge County.

The temporary relief was the result of a petition by West Union on Dec. 9 after two unsuccessful attempts by Pennsboro to make the line connection between the two water systems, the commission said. The issue is the timing and the installation of a valve to control the pressure.

West Union and Pennsboro are or have upgraded water systems. Pennsboro finished first.

“The record currently before the commission demonstrates immediate risk to the operational integrity of West Union’s system and to the jail’s storage tank if Pennsboro’s high-pressure system is connected without appropriate safeguards,” the PSC said.

West Union owns and operates a water treatment plant and distribution system in Doddridge County, including the regional jail, and is in the process of constructing \$23.3 million in upgrades and improvements.

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The Parkersburg News and Sentinel P.O. Box 1787 Parkersburg, WV 26102-1787 304-485-1891 7 48445 05010 4	Resiliency Center accepting food donations The Wood County Resiliency Center is hosting another holiday food drive for those in need within the community. The food drive continues today and will go into Thursday, said director Sydney Weber. Details, Page 5A	Parkersburg Art Center slates winter classes The Parkersburg Art Center is offering a wide variety of classes this winter for kids, teens, adults, and seniors, with more options coming throughout the season. Details, Page 5A	2 SECTIONS 20 PAGES VOLUME 16, ISSUE 292 <table><tr><td>Classified</td><td>5B</td><td>Living</td><td>6A</td></tr><tr><td>Comics</td><td>5B</td><td>Lottery</td><td>10A</td></tr><tr><td>Deaths</td><td>2A</td><td>Puzzles</td><td>7A</td></tr><tr><td>Editorial</td><td>4A</td><td>Records</td><td>8A</td></tr><tr><td>Entertainment</td><td>7A</td><td>Region</td><td>5A</td></tr><tr><td>Horoscope</td><td>6A</td><td>Sports</td><td>1B</td></tr></table>	Classified	5B	Living	6A	Comics	5B	Lottery	10A	Deaths	2A	Puzzles	7A	Editorial	4A	Records	8A	Entertainment	7A	Region	5A	Horoscope	6A	Sports	1B
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