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E-mail this story
Printer Friendly
Version

NEWS & SERVICES

HOME

LOCAL NEWS

MISS / ALA

WEATHER

OPINION

SPORTS

BUSINESS

ENTERTAINMENT

FOOD

LIFE

OBITUARIES

ARCHIVES

MARKETPLACE

CLASSIFIEDS

JOBS

HOMES

AUTOS

ABOUT US

CONTACT US

HOME DELIVERY

E-EDITION

ADVERTISING

HELP

CORRECTIONS

PHOTO GALLERY

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Fulgham faces February trial in escape case

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Starkville Bureau Report

STARKVILLE - Capital murder defendant Kristi Leigh Fulgham is set to go to trial in Oktibbeha County Circuit Court in February on charges related to a 2004 escape attempt.

Fulgham is charged with capital murder in the 2003 shooting death of her estranged husband, Joseph Fulgham of Longview.

In October 2004, officials launched an investigation following the discovery of a hole cut in a perimeter fence around the Oktibbeha County Jail.

The investigation led to Fulgham, who was indicted last year on the escape charge and alleged possession of a cell phone and charger, both considered contraband, in jail.

Justin Mackenzie Gray of Ninth Avenue in Amory and David Richard West of Seventh Avenue in Amory were charged with assisting in an attempted escape. Gray's case is scheduled for trial Jan. 25.

Circuit Judge Jim Kitchens filed an order Nov. 7 removing himself from the capital murder case, which is now assigned to Circuit Judge Lee Howard.

Fulgham's half-brother, Tyler Edmonds, was convicted in July 2004 of simple murder and sentenced to life in prison for his alleged involvement in the case.

Kitchens mentioned Fulgham in relation to Edmonds' guilt during Edmonds' sentencing, allegedly hurting her ability to get a fair trial, according to a motion asking Kitchens to recuse himself. The capital murder case is in call status for the court term.

Fulgham went to the Mississippi State Hospital at Whitfield in Brandon in October in regard to the capital murder case, but Fulgham refused to speak with doctors, according to court records.

Court records do not show a recusal order on the escape charge. The case is set for trial Feb. 1 under Kitchens docket for the upcoming court term. Kitchens said he could not comment on the escape charge.

In December, the state Court of Appeals denied a motion to interview a juror on behalf of Edmonds. According to court records, a good friend of the juror informed an attorney for Edmonds that "she was contacted after the trial by the circuit judge who told her that the jury had done the right thing."

Kitchens says he routinely answers any questions juries may have after their service is over for the week.

"If they based the verdict on the evidence as they saw it and the law as I instructed them, then they've done their job," Kitchens said.

The appeals court also ruled to strike a letter from Edmonds' attorney dated Dec. 14.

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72

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