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Local man faces first-degree murder in machete incident

DANVILLE—Charges against a Hoopeston man who allegedly hit another man in the head with a machete have been amended to four counts of first-degree murder.

Robert S. Akers, 26, who had been charged with aggravated battery for allegedly hitting Larry Brougher, 26, in the head with a machete on May 22, appeared at a preliminary hearing Thursday in Vermilion County Circuit Court.

Mr. Brougher was taken to Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital and was airlifted to Carle Foundation Hospital, Urbana, where he died May 26. According to information from the Champaign County Coroner's office, Mr. Brougher died from complications from blunt force trauma to the head.

Hoopeston Police Chief Mark Drollinger said Akers and Mr. Brougher had an altercation at a home in the 300 block of West Maple. The men allegedly argued over stolen lawn ornaments when Akers allegedly pulled a machete from his pants and hit Mr.

Brougher with it.

Akers was arrested a few hours later but escaped from the squad car still handcuffed. After asking for help from residents, two citizens found Akers, still handcuffed, the next evening in Wellington and brought him to police.

Akers has alleged that at least one of the men who brought him to police hit him in the head with a board. That incident is still being investigated by Iroquois County authorities.

Vermilion County State's Attorney Frank Young had said previously that he will not seek the death penalty in the case because it does not meet statutory requirements. Akers faces 20-60 years in prison or possibly a life sentence.

Akers also faces an escape charge, a Class 2 felony.

Akers, who pleaded not guilty to the charges, is being held in the Public Safety Building in lieu of \$500,000 (10%) bond.

Hoopeston Area to juggle early outs with DACC schedule

With school barely over for the year, Hoopeston Area officials are already looking ahead to problems that might be caused when the district and Bismarck-Henning share vocational ed classes at Rossville-Alvin High School in the fall.

At Thursday night's board meeting, Hoopeston Area Superintendent Mark Conolly said such things as early dismissal from the start of school to Labor Day may might cause problems with high school students taking vocational classes through Danville Area Community College.

Local students have for years gotten out early those days because the usual heat makes some classrooms

unbearable. This year, the district will try to make sure the early dismissal does not adversely affect students taking DACC classes.

DACC will offer vocational classes at Rossville-Alvin High School after voters in that district last year approved deactivating. Rossville-Alvin students were allowed to choose attending either Hoopeston Area or Bismarck-Henning this coming year.

The key to solving this situation and others that will arise is flexibility, Conolly said. "There are things we haven't anticipated that will come up," he said. "We can make it as long as everybody works together."

See HA on other side

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Obituaries

GASKELL—Mary L. Gaskell, 94, of Hoopeston died at 1:36 p.m. Tuesday, June 14, 2005 at Bethany Home, Waupaca, Wis. Funeral services will be at 11 a.m. Monday at Hamilton-Orr Funeral Home, Hoopeston. Burial will be in Cedar Park Cemetery, Calumet Park. Visitation was 5-8 p.m. Sunday at the funeral home. Memorials may be made to a charity of the donor's choice.

LANG—The Rev. John W. Lang, 42, of Claytonville died at 6:45 a.m. Wednesday, June 15, at home. Funeral

services were at 10:30 a.m. Saturday at Union Church, Cissna Park. Burial was in Cissna Park Cemetery. Visitation was 4-8 p.m. Friday at Knapp Funeral Home, Cissna Park, and one hour before services Saturday at the church. Memorials are suggested to a fund for his daughter's education or New Beginnings Fellowship, Cissna Park.

SMITH—Anna C. Smith, 104, of Milford died at 8:30 a.m. Thursday, June 16, 2005 at Watseka Rehabili-

tation and Health Care Center. Funeral services were at 2 p.m. Sunday at St. John's Lutheran Church, Schwer. Burial was in St. John's Lutheran Cemetery, Schwer.

Visitation was 4-8 p.m. Saturday at Segur-Knapp Funeral Home, Watseka and one hour before services at the church. Memorials are suggested to the church.

Briefly

Multi Agency van schedule

This week's schedule for the Hoopeston Multi Agency transportation project is: Monday, Hoopes-

ton/Rossville shuttle; Wednesday, Danville; Thursday, Hoopeston shuttle; Friday, Danville. To arrange a ride, call 283-5544.

Community center activities include: Monday-Friday, cards, noon; Thursday, men's coffee 9 a.m.

Meetings

- Rossville Village Board, 7 p.m. Monday, village office.
- Rossville-Alvin School Board, 7 p.m. Monday, grade school office.
- Hoopeston City Council, 7 p.m. Tuesday, city hall.

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Police News

A **46-year-old** Hoopeston man reported Thursday that he was waiting in the Second Chance Saloon parking lot, 102 N. Market, when he heard a bang on top of his car. He got out to find a large dent in the passenger side roof.

No tickets or injuries were reported in an accident at 8:55 p.m. Saturday in the 1000 block of West Main.

Police said Richard A. Willfong of Hoopeston was eastbound in a 1999 Ford Ranger when he veered to the

right and hit a parked 1989 Pontiac owned by Teodulo Rivera, also of Hoopeston.

Jose Jesus Gonzalez Mendez, 33, of 333 W. Orange was arrested at 1:13 a.m. Sunday in the area of Flowers and Gifts by Molly Culbert, 702 W. Main.

Mendez was charged with retail theft after he was allegedly seen running from the business with a large potted plant.

He was released on \$100 cash bond.

HA continued from other side

Conolly predicted possible conflicts in scheduling and transporting students from Hoopeston Area and Bismarck-Henning but said the challenges will be met. "We're looking forward to this," he said. "It's an exciting challenge for everybody. It's going to be interesting."

In unrelated action, the board approved an \$11,438 bid from Hessler Paving and Contracting to overlay a section of the high/middle school parking lot. The bid on the 270' by 60' section was \$2,000 less than the nearest competitor, said building and grounds administrator Darrell Brown. The cost is higher than was anticipated because of higher oil prices.

In related business, the board approved requesting an extension on Life Safety work for each building.

Life Safety covers the physical structures and includes things such as roofs and heating.

Last month the board approved a 10-year Life Safety study which outlines work that needs to be done over the next decade. "We probably do a better job than most districts, honestly, but we have a lot to do in the next

five to 10 years," Brown said.

In unrelated action, the board approved several personnel issues including the resignations of Kim Burch, high school French/middle school language arts; Todd Burch, high school government; Will Clayton, speech/language pathologist; and Linda Lugo, Honeywell aide.

They also approved hiring Sherree Benjamin, second grade; Dawn Ferguson, elementary music; Mitch Pruemmer, Honeywell physical education; Adam Tinken, high school social studies, high school head volleyball coach; Jamie Watson, middle school language arts; Jana Fesser, junior varsity volleyball; and Angie Simpson, Honeywell special education aide.

Weather

Mostly sunny today. High 84. Tonight, mostly clear. Low 63. Tomorrow, partly cloudy. High 87, low 64.

For current weather conditions, call Hoopeston Weather Service, **(217) 283-6221**.

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