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Document: Driver said window broken

Warrant application provides account of shooting; man says he opened door to show hands to officers

BY NICHOLAS RONDINONE AND JOSH KOVNER

Paul Witherspoon III told state police investigators his window did not work and he had opened the door to show police his hands when Hamden and Yale police officers opened fire on his car, striking a female passenger, a search warrant application released Thursday shows.

The application gives the first official account from Witherspoon of the April 16 shooting that stemmed from a traffic stop on Dixwell Avenue in New Haven that sent Stephanie Washington, 22, to the

hospital with gunshot wounds that were not life-threatening. It confirms that state police did not find a gun in the car.

State police investigators, assigned to the case by the New Haven State's Attorney, filed the application Monday to search the car, detailing to a judge that they were looking for evidence connected to a first-degree assault. The search warrant application offers a glimpse at the charges the officers could face if authorities find probable cause to make arrests.

In filing the application, a detective

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CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE

In a still photo from a video from Hamden police officer Devin Eaton's body camera, Paul Witherspoon III is shown getting out of his car during a police stop on April 16 in New Haven moments before police began shooting, wounding a New Haven woman. The recall function on Eaton's body camera was used to show the moments leading up to and including when he fired his gun.

Dem pitches sales tax hike

But opposition in party comes from Lamont and House speaker

BY CHRISTOPHER KEATING

HARTFORD — A Hartford state senator is proposing a statewide sales tax increase to help low-income communities, but the idea is being rejected by two fellow Democrats — Gov. Ned Lamont and House Speaker Joe Aresimowicz.

The proposal by Sen. John Fonfara, the co-chair of the tax-writing finance committee, sets up the battle lines for the clash over taxes and spending over the next five weeks as lawmakers try to reach a budget deal before the legislative session ends June 5.

The proposed increase in the sales tax to 6.85 percent, up from the current 6.35 percent, would raise an estimated \$340 million in the fiscal year starting July 1.

Fonfara said the bill is a multifaceted measure to help the state's cash-strapped cities and about 60 communities overall among the state's 169 municipalities.

But Lamont rejected the idea in the same way he has repeatedly opposed any increases in the rates of the personal income

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MICHAEL MCANDREWS/SPECIAL TO THE COURANT

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art preparator Andrew Garcia checks the level of Vincent Van Gogh's "Vase with Poppies" after it was installed Thursday. The painting is now on view, just in time for the museum's annual Fine Arts & Flowers event this weekend.

WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART

VAN GOGH PIECE IS BACK

Artist's 'Vase with Poppies,' authenticated last month, returns

BY SUSAN DUNNE

Friday is a red-letter day at Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art.

After about a 30-year absence, an 1886 oil painting of a vivid crimson bouquet of flowers that last month was authenticated as having been painted by Vincent Van Gogh is once again hanging on the walls of the Hartford museum.

The public can see "Vase with Poppies" in the second-floor Kriebel gallery at the

top of the Morgan staircase, where it was installed Thursday afternoon. The museum's other Van Gogh, a self-portrait painted by the legendary Dutch artist in 1887, also hangs in that gallery, which is dedicated to European art of the late 19th century.

Friday is an appropriate day to unveil "Vase with Poppies," as it's the opening of the three-day Fine Art & Flowers fundraising event that exhibits more than 60 arrangements by Hartford-area florists,

interior designers and garden clubs that were inspired by artworks in the museum.

"Vase with Poppies" will be paired with an arrangement made by Sandy Lamo from A Special Place Floral Studio in West Hartford.

"We are thrilled to have Van Gogh's 'Vase with Poppies' back home," says Oliver Tostmann, the curator of European art at the Atheneum.

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Stink over Manchester landfill may be resolved

Town officials hopeful dump's stench could be gone for good

BY JESSE LEAVENWORTH

MANCHESTER — The periodic stink that spread from the Manchester landfill, a fog of rank odor that plagued the western side of town for several years, has apparently been quelled.

Officials on Thursday did not want to declare absolute victory — especially with summer yet to come — but Public Works Director Tim Bockus said: "We're cautiously optimistic."

Town board of directors Minority Leader Cheri Eckbreth, who lives on West Center Street in the heart of stench alley, said she has not detected a whiff of bad air from the dump lately.

"They may have nailed it," Eckbreth said. "I'm crossing my fingers as summer approaches."

A town contractor completed installation of 42 gas collection wells in February. Methane and hydrogen sulfide are now flowing from those new wells and three

Turn to **Landfill, Page A4**

Guilty plea

Politically connected developer Robert V. Matthews faces years in prison after pleading guilty Thursday to conspiracy, money laundering and tax offenses for stealing millions from foreign investors he persuaded to invest in a moribund Palm Beach hotel-condominium project. The bilked investors claimed in a related lawsuit that Matthews, 61, of Palm Beach, used their money for, among other things, a down payment on a 151-foot yacht.

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Matthews

Wethersfield protest

Over 100 protesters marched down the Silas Deane Highway Thursday night demanding justice for 18-year-old Anthony Jose Vega Cruz, who was shot by Wethersfield police Saturday during a traffic stop and died Monday. Protesters questioned the police department's narrative, saying that Cruz, who had recently moved to Wethersfield, wouldn't have hurt anyone and, even if officers suspected he had stolen a car, they shouldn't have used lethal force.

Connecticut, Page B1

Arbor Day

If spring has you excited about trees budding and flowers blooming, you aren't the only one. Today and Saturday, in towns and cities across Connecticut people will get their hands dirty with tree plantings, clean ups and outdoor activities to celebrate Arbor Day.

Connecticut, Page B1

Straight for the heart

"Avengers: Endgame" goes straight for the heart, not the head. It dwells at considerable length in tearful reunions and farewells. And in a notable exception to the Marvel Cinematic Universe's nobody-really-dies storytelling policy, things wrap up with a goodbye-for-real involving a majorly major character. **Living, Page D1**

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Tax

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tax or sales tax.

"The governor's preference is to broaden the sales tax base and capture uncollected revenue from areas of growth, rather than increasing the overall rate, just as he outlined in his proposed budget," said Maribel La Luz, Lamont's spokeswoman.

Aresimowicz, the leader of the 91-member House Democratic caucus, said he supports the concept of helping lower-income communities, but he said that raising the sales tax on "the middle class and the working class seems unfair."

He said it makes no sense to increase sales taxes that would be paid by low-income earners, who often live in cities, and then return the money back to those same communities.

Aresimowicz was already concerned about Lamont's call for extending the sales tax to numerous items that are now

tax-free, including haircuts, college textbooks, diapers, car seats, bicycle helmets and veterinary care.

"I believe that the governor's initial budget proposal was too heavy on what I would call middle-class and working-class tax increases," he said. "My caucus expressed a desire to have a fairer system. That's why we proposed the capital gains tax" increase.

The tax-writing finance committee will hold a public hearing Friday on a proposed surcharge of 2 percentage points on investment income that would apply to single filers earning more than \$500,000 per year and couples earning more than \$1 million. The current top rate for the state income tax is 6.99 percent, and the top, separate rate for capital gains would be 8.99 percent. Lamont, though, recently opposed that idea.

Aresimowicz also said he generally opposes "earmarking" money for specific uses, like how Fonfara's bill would send the new sales tax revenue mostly back to lower-income communities. Aresimowicz

said he prefers the traditional method of collecting money for the state's general fund and then having the legislature allocate it for various spending programs.

"Let's be honest. We have a little bit of a credibility problem, either real or perceived," Aresimowicz said. "Things change, and we need to adjust midstream. So that's why we've been opposed to earmarks. That policy works today. ... That's why I just don't like earmarks because they're really hard to live up to in a changing economy and a changing budget process."

Senate Republican leader Len Fasano, of North Haven, also rejected Fonfara's proposed sales tax increase, saying it would hurt the state at a time when the surplus for the current fiscal year and the size of the rainy day fund are both growing. He attributed those positive impacts to the bipartisan budgets Republicans helped write, and he said the proposed tax increase would be a mistake by Democrats.

"That's all they ever think of is revenue, revenue, revenue," Fasano said. "They

never stop and wonder what the impact is to the average person. The sales tax is a regressive tax. Whether you broaden it or increase it, you're still affecting the same people in the same way."

Despite criticism by the governor and House speaker, Fonfara said he is sticking to his sales tax proposal. He said he is trying to help cities and lower-income communities in a systematic fashion on an issue that is often overlooked at the Capitol.

"The question is what kind of state we want to have," Fonfara said. "The inertia in this building is legendary."

Fonfara is calling for additional tax changes, including a new payroll tax that business lobbyists say is essentially a tax on employers and eliminating the car tax, a controversial move that has been tried by multiple governors and legislators but has remained unresolved for decades.

All the proposals will be part of a public hearing Monday.

Christopher Keating can be reached at ckeating@courant.com.

Van Gogh

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"It's a wonderful opportunity for our visitors to see the painting in company with some of the other remarkable French Impressionist works from the Anne Parrish Titzell bequest. This is a rare moment to see the highlights of her collection on view."

"Vase with Poppies" has been in the museum's collection since 1957, when it was bequeathed upon the death of Titzell, who lived in Redding. Other items in Titzell's bequest, including works by Monet, Renoir and Degas, also hang in the Kriebel gallery.

The painting was then believed to be a Van Gogh. However, in 1990 prominent art scholar Walter Feilchenfeldt cast doubt on the authenticity of both of the Atheneum's Van Goghs. The artworks were examined with the technology available at the time. The self-portrait was found to have an under-painting and regained its authenticity status. "Vase with Poppies" did not pass muster and was shelved.

In recent years, with better technologies available, the museum revisited "Vase with Poppies." Digital X-ray and advanced infrared reflectograms revealed an underpainting. At that point, the painting was sent to the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. There, the artwork's paint, materials, linen and style were examined and the painting was authenticated as a real Van Gogh. After the authentication, the Van Gogh Museum sent the painting back to Hartford.

"Vase with Poppies" is considered one of Van Gogh's earliest floral works. He moved to Paris in 1886. Influenced by colorful Impressionist works he saw there, and with ready access to flowers, he began painting them to experiment with color. Van Gogh's previous



MICHAEL MCANDREWS/SPECIAL TO THE COURANT

Vincent Van Gogh's "Vase with Poppies" will be on view during the Fine Art & Flowers event, which runs Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is a \$3 upcharge in admission.

works, created in Nuenen in the Netherlands, were primarily still lifes and paintings of peasants in dark earth tones.

Fine Art & Flowers runs Friday from 11 a.m.

to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is a \$3 upcharge in admission during the event, to benefit the museum's special exhibits, educational programs and

operating expenses.

Susan Dunne can be reached at sdunne@courant.com.

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80 Seymour St., Hartford



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Presented by Dr. Darren Tishler

Hartford HealthCare HealthCenter – Enfield
100 Hazard Ave., Enfield



Darren Tishler, MD

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