

Man gets 6 month sentence in meth case

By SARAH BULLOCK
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A Cortlandville man was sentenced Thursday to six months in jail and five years of probation in Cortland County Court after a jury found him guilty in August of manufacturing methamphetamine last year.

Tomas C. Kaiser, of 3078 Page Green Road, was one of four people arrested when Katelynne M. Thomas, 22, of 514 Warren Road, Ithaca, tried to smuggle meth in the binding of a book to a Cortland County Jail inmate.

Kaiser was given two sentences to run concurrently of six months in jail and five years of probation for third-degree unlawful manufacture of methamphetamine and criminal possession of precursors to making methamphetamines, felonies.

At sentencing, Judge Julie Campbell told Kaiser he was in "complete denial," noting that he admitted to past meth-related crimes, but not the crimes he was convicted of.

Campbell said that Kaiser claims to be free of his meth addiction, but did not do anything about getting drug treatment before his sentencing.

"You don't just turn off a meth addiction," Campbell said.

Pointing to her cases in Family Court, Campbell described to Kaiser where he fit in to a "bigger picture" of drug use in the county.

Campbell estimated that about once a week she and Cortland County Judge William Ames deal with a child neglect case involving parents using drugs.

"They seek drugs over their own kids," she said, noting that some children in the county are born testing positive for meth and crack cocaine.

"Do you know what it's like to see a baby go through withdrawal?" she asked Kaiser. "It's heart-wrenching."

In a nearly inaudible voice, Kaiser apologized.

"I know I contributed to this problem in Cortland and I didn't mean to," Kaiser said. "I'm very sorry for doing that."

Assistant District Attorney Eliza Filipowski argued that Kaiser deserved the maximum sentence of 2 1/2 years in prison with one year of post-release supervision.

"This defendant shows no responsibility for his actions; everyone else is at fault," she said.

Defense attorney Keith Dayton argued that six months in jail and five years of probation was the right sentence, noting that Kaiser has no prior criminal record. Campbell agreed with Dayton, calling the longer prison term the "easier way out."

"If you screw up on probation, you're back," Campbell told Kaiser. "I have a very long memory."

Kaiser was originally charged with additional counts of fifth-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance and fifth-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance, felonies.

Thomas was sentenced Sept. 5 in County Court to time served after she spent 271 days in jail, as well as five years of probation. Thomas was charged with promoting prison contraband and fifth-degree attempted criminal sale of a controlled substance, felonies, and seventh-degree criminal possession of a controlled substance and fifth-degree conspiracy, misdemeanors.

Thomas' sentence also covered a charge of felony meth manufacturing stemming from a July 2012 arrest after city firefighters, responding to a possible house fire at the 95 Maple Ave. home she shared with her boyfriend, Damian Grant, found a meth lab.

Grant was sentenced in December to six months in the County Jail and five months of probation for felony meth manufacturing in that case.

In other court action, Steven C. Knight, 49, of 2956 Ridge Road, Cortlandville, pleaded guilty to first-degree criminal contempt, a felony, in exchange for one to three years in state prison.

Knight was originally charged with second-degree criminal mischief, first-degree criminal contempt, felonies, and petit larceny, a misdemeanor, after he was arrested Dec. 1 for damaging the property of a woman who had an order of protection against him, according to a county indictment. The incident occurred at 164 Central Ave. and Knight damaged more than \$1,500 worth of property, according to police.

Dryden supervisor under fire

Fraud accusations surface over signature on land designation document

By MATT LEADER
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DRYDEN — The abrupt resignation of the town's director of planning, Dan Kwasnowski, prompted accusations of fraud against Town Supervisor Mary Ann Sumner for the signing of a backdated document.

Local resident Jacques Schickel, brother of Republican Bruno Schickel who ran against Sumner for town supervisor in 2011, came before the Town Board Thursday with a copy of a State Environmental Quality Review document necessary for the town to have approved the designation of three parcels of land totaling 964 acres as critical environmental areas in July 2012.

Schickel said that the document was prepared in July this year, and was backdated by Kwasnowski to align with the town's designation of the three CEA sites. CEA designations protect land from potentially environmentally dam-

aging building projects.

The three CEAs in question were wetlands located in the northwest portion of Dryden.

Jacques Schickel, who discovered the inconsistency utilizing a Freedom of Information Law request, said Sumner had signed the document in July 2013 even though it was dated July 2012, and that it had never been brought before the Town Board for consideration or approval.

Without a SEQR document, the Town Board could not have designated the three CEA sites.

The town originally had plans for 35 CEA site designations, though due to public protest spearheaded by Bruno Schickel, the efforts were abandoned. The only sites that received the CEA designation would have required the SEQR document for their designation to be valid.

A dozen local residents utilized the citizen's privilege portion of the meet-

ing, voicing their collective suspicion that Sumner's signature was an intentional attempt to deceive the town and push the CEA sites through to the state for approval.

Sumner admitted that she "signed the form in question," but said that she "did not notice" the date on the document before signing it, and that her oversight was due to her efforts to get caught up on work before heading to Los Angeles for an environmental conference.

Schickel said he "absolutely does not" believe her explanation.

Kwasnowski officially resigned Sept. 12 after being given the choice between willful resignation and termination by the Town Board. Questions were also raised by the audience about whether Kwasnowski's and Sumner's actions merited a legal response.

In a prepared statement, Town Board member Linda Lavine said that in examining Kwasnowski's alleged doctoring of the SEQR document, the board

"didn't pursue a lot of proof that would have held up in court," and that they "didn't feel his actions warranted legal action," adding that she believed that through its successful call for Kwasnowski's resignation, the board had "avoided what would have been a waste of town money."

"It was a stupid mistake," said Sumner of Kwasnowski's actions. "I'd only be guessing (at Kwasnowski's motives)."

Jacques Schickel sought Republican support for the meeting with an email sent to GOP supporters preceding Thursday's meeting, which outlines what he had uncovered regarding the fraudulent document.

Kwasnowski could not be reached for comment in time for publication of this story.

No charges have been filed against Sumner or Kwasnowski.

Sumner is running against Republican Ron Szymanski for re-election as town supervisor. Election day is Nov. 5.

Cemetery seeking funding, support

Cortland Rural Cemetery presents county with plan that includes art walks and concerts

By CATHERINE WILDE
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Walking trails, art walks and concerts could be things to do at the Cortland Rural Cemetery in coming years, if a plan by cemetery board of trustees president John Hoeschele takes hold.

Hoeschele announced his plan at the Cortland County Legislature's Budget and Finance Committee meeting Thursday as part of an initiative to raise money and make the Tompkins Street cemetery sustainable in the future.

He was seeking monetary support from the county as part of an ongoing effort to raise funds for the cemetery, which he says has a budget of approximately \$125,000 yearly.

Hoeschele did not give a specific figure he sought from the county. The city has helped out the cemetery in recent months, righting headstones and replacing a deteriorating water system. The city's Department of Public Works also removed 66 dump truck loads of dirt and other debris from the site that the cemetery had been collecting from burials.

The cemetery is in the black this year, he said, but it is uncertain if that would be the case next year.

The committee took no action on the matter.

The cemetery was founded in 1853 and is at about 85 percent capacity now so depending on the number of burials yearly, it could last about another 30 to 50 years, Hoeschele said.

Therefore it needs a plan for the future, he said.

"People don't get excited about cemeter-



Joe McIntyre/staff photographer

John Hoeschele, president of the Cortland Rural Cemetery board of trustees, stands near a monument that was repaired this past summer.

ies as an institution, they use them when they have to," said Hoeschele. "But they are a great place to walk, to bird watch, take pictures and listen to music."

If the community is engaged in new ways to use the cemetery, it will be more likely to receive community support and also be more attractive as a recipient of grant funds.

Hoeschele says he has reached out to Seven Valleys Health Coalition for consideration of the cemetery as a place for walking trails and the Cultural Council of Cortland County about art shows.

Budget and Finance Chair Tony Pace

(D-7th Ward) said state law would allow the county to financially support or donate equipment to the cemetery, but he could not say whether the county would agree. Pace said he wants to attend more presentations on the idea before deciding if he would support it.

Legislator Susan Briggs (R-Cortlandville) said the idea was "unusual" but that she could support it if it had community support and was being advocated by the cemetery board of trustees. Briggs said donating equipment to the cemetery would be more feasible than giving money to it, given the county's fiscal situation.

Police/Fire Log

Truxton boy hurt after being hit by truck

TRUXTON — A 5-year-old boy suffered minor cuts and bruises after he tried to dart across Route 41 behind a school bus and was struck by a truck Thursday afternoon in Willet.

A school bus had just dropped the boy off and started to move north when the boy noticed a group of children on the other side of the road at 1363 Route 41 and ran across the road behind the bus and in front of the truck that had been stopped behind the bus, said Sgt. Michael Winchell.

The boy was taken to Wilson Medical Center in Johnson City, but was only bruised, Winchell said.

Dennis Kemka, 49, of 104 Kemak Road, the driver of the blue 2010 Chevrolet Silverado, was watching the group of children and did not see the boy, he said.

"He really had no chance to react," Winchell said of the driver.

No tickets were expected to be issued against Kemka, he said.

Man charged with drunken driving

Accused: Shea M. Sabin, 25, of 20 1/2 Rickard St., Cortland

Charges: Driving while intoxicated and driving while intoxicated with a blood-alcohol content of 0.08 percent or more, misdemeanors, and failure to keep right, a violation

Details: Sabin was pulled over at 2:19 this morning on Clinton Avenue by city police, said Lt. Rick Troyer.

Legal action: Sabin is set to appear today in City Court.

Police: Man charged \$8K on stolen card

Accused: Christopher A. Shutt, 38, of 33 N. Church St., Cortland

Charges: Third- and fourth-degree grand larceny, felonies

Details: Shutt stole a credit card belonging to a 75-year-old Cortland woman

in August and ran up \$8,000 worth of charges, said city police Lt. Rick Troyer.

Shutt was arrested at 2:30 p.m. Thursday at the police station, Troyer said.

Shutt and the woman knew each other, Troyer said.

Legal action: Shutt was sent to the Cortland County Jail on \$1,000 cash or \$2,000 bond bail and is set to appear Nov. 18 City Court.

Police: Man harassed Homer village officials

Accused: Edward S. McCorduck, 51, of Morgan Drive, Homer

Charges: Aggravated harassment, a misdemeanor

Details: McCorduck sent anonymously in September a total of five irate and vulgar emails to Homer village employees and Mayor Genevieve Suits complaining about his garbage service and was arrested at 8:31 Thursday, said Homer Village Police Chief Mark Helms.

Legal action: McCorduck is set to appear Nov. 19 in Homer Town Court.

Tompkins budget forum focuses on youth services

Tompkins County legislators Thursday night were urged to preserve funding requests to support county youth services programs, as the Legislature held its annual community budget forum on the proposed 2014 county budget.

About 60 people attended the forum, and nearly half of them spoke. The vast majority of speakers urged legislators to support over-target requests submitted as part of the Youth Services budget — 15 of the speakers urging that a nearly \$21,000 request to fund the One-to-One Big Brothers Big Sisters program be restored.

Many speakers — including parents, children, and those who have served as a big brother or big sister — offered moving personal stories about how the program has impacted their lives and the lives of others.

Allen Green, who still serves the Ithaca Youth Bureau after many years as its director, told legislators that "unrelenting deep cuts" in funding have forced the program to focus services on where participants live, not on those of greatest need, and he maintained that it would be "fiscally irresponsible" not to take advantage of this important community resource for children at risk.

The administrator's budget, with total expenditures of \$170.2 million and local dollar spending of \$81.6 million, recommends a 3.5 percent rise in the tax levy and would increase county property taxes by \$21 for the owner of an average \$163,000 home.

Legislators meeting as an Expanded Budget Committee will begin recommending modifications to the administrator's budget when they reconvene Monday for the first of three scheduled voting meetings.

The 2014 recommended budget and other budget information are posted at the budget page of the county website at www.tompkinscounty.gov/ctyadmin/Budget/index.

There are ongoing opportunities to comment on the budget as the process moves forward.

Citizens are invited submit budget comments online at the county website budget page, and are also encouraged to visit the county's Facebook page on the budget.

Written comments can be mailed to the Legislature Office at the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building, 121 E. Court St., Ithaca.

The Legislature's formal budget hearing is Nov. 12. All budget meetings, including the hearing, take place at Legislature Chambers on the second floor of the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building.