

HUNT TRIAL

Continued from page 1

Hunt is charged with open murder for his role in a drug deal/robbery that resulted in the death of Kevin Johnson, a Kentucky truck driver who was shot and killed in the early morning hours of Nov. 15, 2018 in Flowerfield Township while attempting to procure \$200 worth of methamphetamine that, unbeknownst to Johnson, didn't exist.

Hunt's co-defendants in the case have both reached plea agreements with the prosecution, including Kayla Cheney who has admitted to pulling the trigger of the 12-gauge sawed-off shotgun that killed Johnson. She is currently serving a 25 to 75-year sentence for second-degree murder. Tyler McNeil, the owner of the aforementioned murder weapon who loaded and brought the gun to the scene of the crime, has pled guilty to armed robbery and is awaiting sentencing.

In addition to open murder, Hunt is charged with two counts of armed robbery, one count of unlawful imprisonment,

one count of second-degree criminal sexual conduct and one count of felony firearm.

Friday's proceedings were limited to the morning session due to a miscommunication concerning scheduling but included expert testimony from Sgt. Brandon Dahl of the St. Joseph County Sheriff's Department regarding photos taken and evidence collected at the scene of the crime and from Johnson's semi truck, as well as the eventual recovery of the murder weapon with assistance from the defendant. Another witness testified about the extraction of data from a cellphone recovered at the murder scene owned by Staniela King's then fiancée Jon Greer, which contained Facebook messages between King and Hunt's Facebook Messenger accounts.

Forensic Scientist Kirk DeLeeuw of the Michigan State Police Crime Lab testified about the identification of blood stains on various surfaces and materials, and

following DeLeeuw's testimony Det. Sgt. Chad Spence, the lead investigator of the case, read parts of nine crime lab reports to the jury in order to enter the documents into evidence in the absence of expert witnesses who were scheduled to testify Friday afternoon but couldn't make the trip.

Circuit Court Judge Paul Stutesman, who is presiding over the trial, said the lab reports would be available to the jury once they enter deliberations. Stutesman joked with the jury that he hoped they weren't disappointed to have avoided five hours of evidentiary testimony from experts on DNA and other subjects, and lauded both the prosecution and defense for getting the reports admitted into evidence "through the good work of both sides."

The trial will resume at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 14 in St. Joseph County Circuit Court.

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SCHNEPP FAMILY

Continued from page 1

"Can we run with mom?" nine-year-old Josie asked, as she witnessed other children running alongside a parent for the last 50 yards or so of the course.

That look of, "I can't say no, but how do I manage all this?" came over Ryan's face.

Keeping close tabs on his anxious crew, he granted his daughter's request. Josie and her older sister, Emma, made their way to an opening in the crowd where they gleefully dashed out to join their mother — exhausted and favoring a sore foot — to cross the finish line. Their younger siblings, Rex and Samantha, cheered them on from the sidelines. It was a sight to behold.

Eventually, Ryan, with Rex and little Samantha in tow, made their way through the crowd to an area past the finish line where they met Casey, Josie and Emma.

"How was the race?" Ryan asked his wife of 14 years in a heartfelt and consoling manner.

"Awful," Casey replied, her tone slightly humorous — slightly. Then, a smile gradually spread across her tired and strained face as her children congratulated her with hugs.

And so, on a gorgeous spring day, occurred the grand finale of a demanding marathon training program that began in the fall of 2018 for the busy 40-year-old wife, mother of four children, coach for Girls on the Run and volunteer for other worthy causes. "Yeah, you could say I have my hands full," she said with a chuckle after a long stint running on a HealthTrac treadmill earlier in the year. All the hours and miles of training had paid off.

After Casey grabbed some fruit and downed a bottle of water, the family gathered together off to the side, away from the crowds.

Then came the moment. Ryan kissed Casey on her cheek while placing the bouquet of red roses in her hand. Even her four excited children stood still, aware

something special was occurring right before their bright, wondering eyes.

Time seemed suspended. The crowds faded away. It was one of those ever so rare moments to be savored in the long arc of human history when the deepest held notions about triumph of the human spirit become manifest.

Ineffable means no adequate words exist to describe something. It can be felt and is known to be true in a profound way — but impossible to define.

Perhaps only the greatest of the great poets come closest to conveying those instances that infuse life with a mysterious beauty that leaves us speechless. "The point of intersection of the timeless with time... music heard so deeply, that it is not heard at all," wrote T.S. Eliot of such moments.

A kiss and roses for a wife and mother who ran her first marathon and crossed the finish line on a beautiful day in May. Ineffable.

FABIUS TOWNSHIP

Continued from page 1

The board heard from St. Joseph County Road Commission Managing Director John Lindsey on the road commission, its history, and what the commission is planning to do in the township in 2020, including doing paving projects on Broadway Road from Three Rivers to A.L. Jones Road, Roberts Road from Broadway to M-60, and Hoffman Road from Three Rivers to the Cass County line. In addition, the road commission is planning on chip sealing County Line Road from

Corey Lake Road to Lucas Road, from Lucas Road to Hoffman Road, and Coon Hollow from County Line Road to Stoldt Road.

The board approved the estimate for a multitude of spring road projects. Kroggel said paving work on Coon Hollow Road will not occur until 2021, because of bridge problems on the road.

The board passed a resolution that would allow them to sell their old Township Hall.

The board welcomed St.

Joseph County Sheriff's Department Deputy Davontae Jennings as the township's new deputy sheriff, replacing Kevin Penn. St. Joseph County Undersheriff Mark Lillywhite, who was in attendance Wednesday and addressed the board along with Jennings and Penn, said the transition from Penn to Jennings would start Feb. 4.

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Michigan forecasts modest growth in economy, tax revenue

By David Eggert
Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and lawmakers received a generally positive economic and revenue forecast Friday but tempered it by warning of budget pressures due to tax cuts, a road-funding deal and other factors.

Economists adopted a consensus agreement that projects jobs to grow by 0.6%, or 26,000, in 2020, a lower unemployment rate and personal income to rise by 3.7% — 1.8% after adjusting for inflation. Michigan's two main accounts, the general fund and the school aid fund, will grow 1.1% this fiscal year and 2.3% next fiscal year — a combined \$733 million more over the two years than was estimated in May.

"We're seeing the economy continue to grow, albeit at a modest pace. It's still growing. The revenues are looking pretty flat," said state Treasurer Rachael Eubanks.

It was not immediately clear how the new numbers

may affect the potential for the Democratic governor and Republican-controlled Legislature to negotiate another mid-year budget bill.

They agreed last month to \$574 million in supplemental spending, which included the restoration of some of the nearly \$1 billion Whitmer had vetoed as part of an impasse over the current \$59 billion budget. Some bigger-ticket programs, such as the Pure Michigan tourism ads and the Going Pro campaign to help businesses recruit students into the trades and other high-demand fields, remain unfunded.

"The good news is that there's a modest increase going forward. But on the other hand, we know that we have huge pressures on the general fund and increases to baseline service cost as well," said budget director Chris Kolb. He pointed to past business and personal tax cuts, higher Medicaid costs, the ongoing phased-in shift of general funds to road construction, indigent defense spending. Michigan also must pick up more of the cost of the federal-state Children's Health Insurance Program, he said.

Whitmer last year unsuccessfully called for a 45-cents-a-gallon fuel tax increase to help fix the roads and halt the eventual diversion of \$600 million a year in general funds to the transportation budget, freeing up money for education. She will propose the 2020-21 budget in February.

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Jim Stamas, a Midland

Republican, called Friday's forecast "great news" because the economy is continuing to grow following the state's lengthy downturn more than a decade ago.

"Our current budget surplus is not a jackpot for new spending. We expect to face new budget pressures in the coming fiscal year," Stamas said, adding that legislators continue to talk with Whitmer about the "political" budget vetoes she made more than three months ago. "This economic and fiscal forecast illustrates that we must remain diligent in how we use taxpayer dollars to meet our challenges and continue to build a brighter future for all Michigan families," he said.

Rep. Jon Hoadley, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, took note that state tax revenue is projected to be \$12.5 billion, or 26%, below a constitutional limit. It is a rising gap that economists attribute partly to tax cuts but also to Michigan not taxing services as the service economy has grown.

"There's a wide swath of economic activity that is not being appropriately accounted for and taxed. So there's some folks that we've seen over the last decade who have really benefited from changes in the tax code while the rest of us working people have picked up the bill," he said, alluding to GOP-enacted business tax reductions. "Now we see that exacerbated moving forward. That's potentially then lost opportunity to tackle the big challenges that folks across Michigan are asking us to fix."

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OPEN HOUSES SUNDAY JAN. 5

Sun., Jan. 5 2-4 p.m.
58608 Winterwood Ln-Three Rivers
\$259,000

New Construction! 3 BR, 2 BA, 1519 sqft, open concept, vaulted ceiling, His and hers closets, main fir Laundry, 2 car att. garage, full bsmt
Dir: From Sixth Ave, S on Pond View Ln, Right on Autumnwood, S on Winterwood

Hostess: Cassandra McWatters, 269-535-0968

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Michigan Real Estate

Sun., Jan 5 12-2 p.m.
58686 Winterwood Ln-Three Rivers
\$269,000

New Construction! 3 BR, 3 BA, 1501 sqft, Open concept, vaulted ceiling, full fin. bsmt w/egress, main fir laundry, 3 car attached garage
Dir: From Sixth Ave, S on Pond View Ln, Right on Autumnwood, S on Winterwood

Hostess: Cassandra McWatters, 269-535-0968

THREE RIVERS - 1200 N Main • 269-592-2533

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