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Charge advances in Woodbridge woman's slaying

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By KEITH EPPS

A murder charge against a Springfield man accused of killing his ex-girlfriend and dumping her body in Stafford was sent to a grand jury following a lengthy hearing yesterday in Stafford General District Court.

John Joseph "Jose" Rogers, 35, is charged with first-degree murder and abduction in the April slaying of 35-year-old Lisa Renee Madaris of Woodbridge.

Judge Gordon Willis certified the charges despite an aggressive defense by attorneys Christopher R.K. Leibig and Andrea Moseley, who argued there is no forensic evidence linking Rogers to the crime and that "speculation" was all the prosecution had.

Leibig also produced a letter from a state medical examiner claiming Madaris had been dead no more than 24 hours when her body was found April 10.

That opinion, if proven to be true, would be contrary to other evidence presented thus far against Rogers.

Prosecutor Sarah Deneke, who spent much of the four-hour hearing in legal skirmishes with the defense team, presented evidence showing Rogers and Madaris had a heated argument late April 6--in Prince William County outside Brittany's Sports Bar and Restaurant in Lake Ridge--just before her disappearance.

Deneke also brought in a Sprint representative from Kansas to show that calls from Rogers' cell phone were made in Stafford late April 6 and early April 7.

Police said Rogers told them he went straight home after leaving the bar and had not been in Stafford.

Alan Williams, a Brittany's regular, testified that he was standing outside late April 6 when Madaris left the bar, followed by Rogers. Williams said the two argued loudly for between 10 and 15 minutes before Rogers pulled Madaris from behind the wheel of her car and kicked her into the back seat. Rogers then drove away, Williams testified.

James Worthan Jr., a defense witness, testified that he witnessed the same altercation. He said the man told the woman he would not let her drive because she'd been drinking.

The remains of Madaris' 2001 Chevrolet Cavalier were found the next morning at a townhouse development under construction off U.S. 1 across from St. William of York Church. It had been burned beyond recognition.

Police were unable to find Madaris until April 10, when Stafford resident Harvey Carey spotted a body in a field off Telegraph Road while taking a walk in the Boswell's Corner area.

Madaris' family and friends were visibly shaken as Carey and others described the grisly scene: "Her face was completely gone," Carey testified.

Rogers went to the Stafford Sheriff's Office later that day after being called by police. Detective Richard Leonard said Rogers told him that he went home after leaving Brittany's and never came to Stafford.

The legal sparring reached a peak when Leibig asked another detective a series of questions about Madaris' lifestyle, possible drug use and whether police had looked at other suspects.

Deneke objected repeatedly and the questions were not answered.

The grand jury will consider the charges against Rogers on Sept. 6. A trial date would be set sometime after that.

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