

**PRESS RELEASE**

TRUMBULL COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Thursday, October 26, 2023

## **18-year-old sentenced to life in prison**

An 18-year-old Warren man was given an indefinite prison sentence of 42 to 47 1/2 years to life for the November 2022 shooting death in a southeast Warren neighborhood.

A Trumbull County jury on Wednesday, October 4, 2023, found Gavin Roberts guilty of one count of aggravated murder and another count of aggravated robbery, both which carry firearms specification.

Roberts of Kenilworth Avenue SE, Warren, was found not guilty of another murder count that carried a pre-calculated and design factor as well as not guilty for a count of aggravated burglary.

Roberts was convicted of killing Brice Hilton, 37, of Farrell, Pa., on Nov. 19, 2022. Testimony at trial showed Hilton was shot four times at Colonial Street and South Feederle Drive SE in Warren. Hilton died shortly afterward at Trumbull Regional Medical Center. Hilton had traveled to Warren in an attempt to buy a cellphone from two men. He was robbed of \$220 by the gunman who was identified by witnesses as Roberts, testimony stated.

Because Roberts was 17 at the time of the crime, according to First Assistant Prosecutor Christopher Becker, Roberts will be eligible for parole after serving 25 years because of 2021 Ohio legislation which restricts sentencing for teen offenders.

The jury took about two hours to deliberate Roberts' fate after hearing a day and a half of testimony. Testimony was briefly interrupted Tuesday morning, Oct. 3 after the defendant was attacked by a spectator who jumped over the bar in Trumbull County Common Pleas courtroom of Judge Cynthia W. Rice and punched Roberts about three times in the face.

The defendant was not seriously injured, and the judge rejected two motions for mistrial that were made by Roberts' attorney Jeff Goodman. A Farrell, Pa., man, who was a nephew of the murder victim, was charged in the courtroom attack and given a three-day jail sentence and fined \$200 for contempt of court.

During the sentencing hearing, the judge heard tearful and emotional statements from the victims, Hilton's fiancée Blair Legg, who was with him at the time of the fatal shooting, and Hilton's mother, LeSonia Moorer-Henry.

Legg, in reading from a prepared handwritten victims' impact statement, asked the judge to give Roberts "the maximum sentence allowable by law."

"I can speak in truth for justice so that (Brice's ) family can have peace," Legg stated. The woman said she and her unborn son could "easily have been murdered that night too... without cause."

In commenting about the youth of Roberts, Legg stated “Age doesn’t dictate punishment, the severity of the crime does.”

Becker and assistant Prosecutor Gabriel Wildman argued for the state in the case.

Becker praised the investigative work of the Warren Police Department in this case and the way Judge Cynthia W. Rice conducted the trial. He also praised the victim impact statement of Legg.

“In my 33 years... I haven’t heard a better statement,” Becker said.

For more information, contact Guy Vogrin of the Trumbull County Prosecutor’s office at 330-675-2485.