

Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA

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Man charged with murder enters plea deal

By Dorothy Chomicz
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A North Pole man accused of killing his 21-year-old wife in 2015 entered a surprise plea deal in Fairbanks Superior Court on Friday.

Russell Wade Burris, 30, was charged with first-degree murder after his estranged wife, Mandy Clemmons, was found dead of a gunshot wound to her head in a driveway off of Larissa Drive in North Pole on

March 30, 2015.

Burris was found near Clemmons' body, covered in lamp oil and with a bottle of acetaminophen nearby. Burris was "turning blue and not looking good," according to charging documents, and troopers determined he had tried to kill himself after shooting Clemmons.

Burris was scheduled to go to trial July 28, but at a previously scheduled 8:30 a.m. hearing Friday, the defense and prosecution requested a second

Russell Wade Burris pleaded guilty Friday morning to first-degree murder in the shooting death of his estranged wife, Mandy Clemmons. DOROTHY CHOMICZ/NEWS-MINER

hearing later that morning to discuss further proceedings in the case.

"A change of plea hearing was not originally contemplated for

PLEA » A3



GOOD MORNING



The weather.

Mostly cloudy with scattered rain showers. Isolated thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs in the lower 70s. Tonight: Isolated thunderstorms in the evening.

High today 71

Low tonight 51

Sunrise: 5:32 a.m.

Sunset: 10:18 p.m.

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EDUCATE TOGETHER

Education Commissioner calls for unity at Tanana Chiefs Conference.

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PREP GRIDDERS

High school football season opens.

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SOURDOUGH JACK:
"I'd moosle my way through the crowd to get some of that soup."



FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION POTLATCH



Moose soup is prepared during the Fairbanks Native Association 50th anniversary potlatch Friday evening at the Chief David Salmon Tribal Hall. ERIC ENGMAN/NEWS-MINER

Drumming, singing and dancing opens the celebration during the Fairbanks Native Association 50th anniversary potlatch Friday evening at the Chief David Salmon Tribal Hall.



Whisenhunt trial expected to wind down Monday

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Closing arguments in the Zachary Whisenhunt murder trial are expected to begin Monday, capping a slow-moving trial in which the defense argued at length over multiple points of procedure but presented little evidence of its own.

Whisenhunt, 30, of Fairbanks, is charged with killing 34-year-old Jenessa Kempski in the early morning hours of Oct. 23, 2014. Kempski's nude body was

found in a wooded area off of North Pole 10 days after she disappeared, but the condition of her body prevented investigators from positively identifying her for two days after she was found.

A state medical examiner testified last week that Kempski had suffered a fractured skull and broken ribs, had drugs in her system and hypothermia may have played a role in her death.

Whisenhunt initially told lead investigator Robert Bressler details about Kempski's injuries that were

not generally known, but later recanted his statements, saying he had only been repeating rumors he'd heard in hopes he'd get a better probation deal on a separate criminal case against him. Whisenhunt also told Bressler he had never met Kempski, even though his semen was found on Kempski's belt.

Kempski's clothing was found inside out and placed on top of her suitcase and other items, not far from where her body was found.

Whisenhunt's attorney, Emily Cooper,

announced Wednesday she would call up to eight people to testify on Friday but instead she questioned Kempski's mother about Kempski's drug use. Cooper then announced the next witness was running late, and after a 30-minute break, Superior Court Judge Douglas Blankenship sent the jury home, telling them the witness would testify Monday morning and closing arguments would then be presented.

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State Supreme Court denies medical license revocation

By Sam Friedman
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Alaska's high court has struck down the State Medical Board's medical license revocation for a Fairbanks doctor who specializes in anti-aging and weight loss treatment.

In what had been the state's first medical license revocation since 2009, Alaska's medical board revoked Dr. David Odom's medical license in 2014. The board pulled Odom's license after concluding he prescribed drugs inappropriately to his patient Sonja Carlson Quebbemann in 2007. Quebbemann died from heart failure about six months after last seeing Odom, but the state investigators didn't directly accuse Odom's treatment of causing her death.

In a 27-page opinion, the court's five justices stated the Medical Board treated Odom's case incorrectly, both in the process the board used to pull his license and in the substance of the board's conclusion that Odom's treatment didn't meet professional standards.

"The Medical Board's decisional document is legally insufficient not only with regard to its choice of sanction, but also in its conclusion that Dr. Odom acted incompetently," the court stated in an opinion written by Justice Peter Maassen.

Odom, 74, has been practicing medicine in Palm Springs, California since he lost his license to practice in Alaska. Odom said in an interview Friday that he believes the action to take his license was an act of retribution by Banner Health, the nonprofit organization that previously operated Fairbanks Memorial

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