

Woman ruled competent for trial in judge threat case

Written by BILL SCHANEN IV
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Court official also rejects argument that comments about Wolfgram were a joke

A 48-year-old woman charged with threatening an Ozaukee County Circuit Court judge because of the sentence he imposed on her son has been found competent to stand trial.

Waukesha County Circuit Court Commissioner Thomas Pieper made the ruling last week based on a psychiatric evaluation of Shelly A. Froelich of West Allis, who faces one felony count of battery or threat to a judge and one misdemeanor count of unlawful use of a telephone-threatening harm for allegedly saying she arranged “a hit” on Judge Tom Wolfgram last month.

Pieper also rejected a motion filed by Froelich’s attorney, Samuel Benedict, to dismiss the charges. Benedict argued that Froelich’s statement to an Ozaukee County sheriff’s deputy during a phone conversation did not constitute a true threat under the law.

“A true threat is a statement that a speaker would reasonably foresee that a listener would reasonably interpret as a serious expression of a purpose to inflict harm,” Benedict wrote in his motion. “The context of the call and the circumstances of the communication demonstrate that the words cannot possibly be construed as anything other than jest or hyperbole.”

Ozaukee County District Attorney Adam Gerol disagreed, as did Pieper, who ordered the case against Froelich to proceed with a preliminary hearing on March 29.

The case was transferred to Waukesha County because of Wolfgram’s connection to the Ozaukee County court system.

According to the criminal complaint filed in Ozaukee County Circuit Court, a woman called the county jail on Jan. 16 and asked to speak to Wolfgram.

When the deputy who answered the call told her the judge was out of the office but would be in the next day, the woman said, “Good, tell him I have a hit on him,” the complaint states.

The caller went on to say she was upset by Wolfgram’s treatment of inmates, particularly her son, then hung up, according to the complaint.

Because of the threat, special police patrols were assigned to watch Wolfgram’s home.

Authorities traced the call to Froelich, whose son, Jason Twieg, is a jail inmate.

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A detective went to Froelich's home and was invited in by her husband. Although Froelich denied making the threatening phone call, her husband told the detective he heard his wife talking on the telephone at the time the call to the jail was made and said she has called the jail and made threats before, the complaint states.

On Jan. 27, 2011, Twieg, a former Belgium resident, was sentenced by Wolfgram to one year in prison and one year in the county jail for violating restraining orders on multiple occasions, according to court records.

Pieper has set Froelich's bail at \$500 and directed her to comply with mental health treatment orders and take her medications as prescribed.

She faces a maximum three years in prison and three years of extended supervision if convicted of threatening the judge.