

Cellphone tracking leads to arrests in homicide

A man was shot dead and dumped on a dead-end street on Northside

By Dan Scanlan & Dana Treen
The Times-Union

Police arrested two suspects in the death of a North Carolina man who was working in Jacksonville when he was shot multiple times in February and dumped on the side of a dead-end street in Northwest Jacksonville.

Branden Joshua Bailey, 26, was taken into custody Wednesday after a short standoff at a Westside mobile home park. He was charged with the first-degree murder of Dustin

Wayne Howell, 38, of Herford, N.C., who was working in Jacksonville for a construction company.

Desi Nathanel Hall, 20, was charged with second-degree murder in the case June 9 and entered a not-guilty plea Thursday.

Howell and Bailey were staying at the same Extended Stay America hotel on Prudential Drive Feb. 17 and seen on surveillance footage sitting outside and smoking together, said Lt. Steve Gallaher of the Sheriff's Office.

The two men left in a car



Bailey Hall

belonging to Bailey's girlfriend, police said. They went to a house on the Westside where Hall was staying. Later during the investigation, police found surveillance of Hall and Bailey arming themselves at the house that night.

Howell was likely in the car at that time, Gallaher said.

A locating device on the car and cellphone tracking placed the car on Owen Avenue, where gunshots were

heard and Howell's body was found the next morning, according to an arrest warrant. He was discovered by a motorist outside the city's Zeta Phi Beta Park at 3721 Owen Ave. near Raines High School.

Owen Avenue is 1.3 miles from the Iris Avenue address where Hall was staying.

The arrest warrant said witnesses also heard gunshots "at the same time the GPS tracker places the vehicle at the scene."

The car then returns to Iris Avenue, where security camera video shows what appears to be two men cleaning its interior, the warrant said.

The car's tire tread pat-

tern matches impressions taken by evidence technicians at the homicide scene, and Bailey's cellphone signal was tracked to that part of town at the same time, the warrant said.

Bailey was arrested Wednesday after the Sheriff's Office received information he was at the New Kings Mobile Park at 11134 New Kings Road. Police said he initially refused to surrender but did when a SWAT team was called. A woman with him also was taken into custody, police said.

Howell's brother, Kyle Howell of St. Augustine, said his brother's death has been tough on the family, especially their parents.

"They are really having a hard time with this, but we are all dealing with it in different ways," he said.

A cousin, Melissa Holland, said Dustin Howell was a general contractor who was working for Manson Construction Co., a Seaside-based company with a Jacksonville office.

"I hope they have the right people and I hope they nail them to the wall," she said. "I think they [his family] will feel the same way I do. It's brought the family together, unfortunately."

dan.scanlan@jacksonville.com, (904) 359-4549
dana.treen@jacksonville.com, (904) 359-4091

JEA discloses failure to test for bromate in water

Missed April sampling blamed on oversight; level satisfactory in May

By Sebastian Kitchen
sebastian.kitchen@jacksonville.com

JEA neglected to test for a particular water contaminant in April, according to the utility, which said there were never safety concerns for consumers.

JEA personnel did not perform the April test for bromate at the Main Street Water Plant and "therefore we cannot be sure of the quality of your drinking water as related to bromate at that time," JEA said. During testing of samples on May 6, the results "came back below detectable levels for bromate."

Even though those tests indicated bromate was at a safe level, the state requires the utility to inform customers of the missed test, said Mike Hightower, JEA's chief public affairs officer.

"Missing one test is totally unacceptable," Hightower said. "We are required to do it. We have put in place checks and balances to make sure this test will never be missed again."

Hightower attributed the missed sampling to an employee retiring and the remaining staff missing the following test before realizing the mistake a few days later. Now, Hightower said, there will be a "primary and a backup" for each test to ensure they are not missed.

"We test for this thing every month," he said.

JEA uses ozone to treat water for sulfide odor control at its Main Street Plant and bromate is a by-product of that process. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection requires a monthly test for bromate for systems that ozonate. JEA has never exceeded the maximum level allowed by the DEP for bromate, either before or after the missed monitoring in April, according to the utility.

"Some people who drink water containing bromate in excess of the maximum

contaminant level (MCL) over many years may have an increased risk of getting cancer," according to JEA. "Any customers who are concerned about their exposure to these contaminants can choose alternative sources of water for ingestion."

Exposure to bromate is not likely to be significant for most people, according to a 2005 report from the World Health Organization on bromate in drinking water. The U.S. EPA created the Disinfectants and Disinfection Byproducts Rules "to limit exposure to these disinfectant byproducts."

'GOT TO TELL EVERYBODY'

Hightower said people are probably more aware of water testing issues after lead was found in the water in Flint, Mich., but he said the situations are very different. The mistake here was caught within about 10 days, he said.

"Although this missed test did not result in an emergency, it is our obligation and commitment to our customers to communicate what happened and what we are doing to correct the situation," according to JEA. The utility is sharing information with customers through its website and in an advertisement that will be taken out in the Times-Union as required by the state.

JEA performs 45,000 tests of water samples a year, according to the utility.

JEA Chief Executive Officer Paul McElroy told board members during their meeting this month that the staff has reviewed the process for bromate testing and "reviewed all other processes." He said they are notifying customers in their invoices and by taking out the ad in the "newspaper of record."

"The bottom line is the safety and well-being of our customers is absolutely paramount. We take that really seriously," Hightower said. "We missed the test and we've got to tell everybody."

Sebastian Kitchen: (904) 359-4161

Boyer, Crescimbeni take council leadership reins

By Nate Monroe
nate.monroe@jacksonville.com

Lori Boyer, a two-term City Council member and longtime San Marco preservation activist known for having a keen eye for detail, officially took the reins Thursday as the Jacksonville City Council president, promising to push an ambitious agenda despite prolonged financial challenges, concerns about law and order and strain between the black community and police.

Boyer — who has a reputation for diving into painstakingly mundane and meticulous challenges — pivoted instead to a grander vision in her first speech as president during an installation ceremony at The Ritz Theatre downtown.

"Be bold. And dream big," she said.

City Councilman John Crescimbeni, a veteran city lawmaker, was sworn in as the vice president.

The two will make a bipartisan leadership team on the City Council. Crescimbeni, a Democrat, said his top priority would be to help Boyer, a Republican.

"I'm here to help her in any way that I can," he said. "We are one city, one Jacksonville and most especially we are one City Council."

Boyer said she will focus on creating new processes — like weekly lunches and district presentations during council meetings — designed to pass on institutional knowledge to the council's newer members and to help one another understand the distinct and collective challenges in neighborhoods across the city.

"We can do more for you if we know how."

Her top policy priority is to help Mayor Lenny Curry campaign for a half-cent sales tax to pay down the city's \$2.8 billion pension debt. She asked members of the audience to vote "yes" on the plan, which will appear on the Aug. 30 ballot.

The presidency is an influential position that allows its holder to imbue the council with its signature leadership style and to select membership on influential committees that shape city spending and public policy.

Boyer this week announced a slate of committee chairs that includes all first-term council members. She tapped Councilwoman Anna Brosche for what is generally the most coveted job, leading the Finance Committee, which holds significant sway



Photos by Bob.Self@jacksonville.com

Lori Boyer addresses the audience for the first time as City Council president at Thursday's ceremony in the Ritz Theatre auditorium.



Bob.Self@jacksonville.com

As his wife Tanya Crescimbeni holds the Bible, John Crescimbeni is sworn in as the City Council Vice President by Chief Judge Mark Mahon. He said his goal this year is to support Lori Boyer the best he can.

over the budget each year.

Other committee chairs are:

- Councilman Scott Wilson on the Neighborhoods, Community Investments and Services Committee.
- Councilman Al Ferraro on the Transportation, Energy and Utilities Committee.
- Councilman Sam Newby

on the Public Health and Safety Committee.

- Councilman Garrett Dennis on the Rules Committee.
- Councilman Danny Beaton on the Land Use and Zoning Committee.

Nate Monroe: (904) 359-4289

Review

Bieber's show about so much more than music — and less

Don't look too close: He may not even be bothering to lip-sync

By Tom Szaroleta
tom.szaroleta@jacksonville.com

The Beliebers met The Deceiber Wednesday night in Jacksonville.

Justin Bieber put on a 90-minute show at Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena, thrilling the sold-out crowd.

But for significant chunks of about half the songs, he didn't even bother lip-syncing. He danced and cavorted and posed,

but the microphone was nowhere near his mouth and his voice magically appeared out of nowhere.

Granted, he was dancing really hard — and make no mistake, he's a heck of a dancer and a very strong entertainer.

And one could argue that he was simply being honest with his fans by not pretending to sing when clearly he wasn't. On the other hand, his voice isn't all that strong — even on his best songs, he sounds Auto-

tuned — so maybe he was doing everyone a favor.

Not that the crowd, overwhelmingly female and very young, cared one bit. They screamed and danced in their seats and sang along with every word. And Bieber did sing quite a bit, whole songs even.

A Justin Bieber concert isn't really about the music anyway — his band was almost irrelevant, playing the entire show in shadows at the back of the stage, and he never introduced any of them. It's about the spectacle, and Bieber delivered that in spades.

There were lasers and indoor fireworks, a shower

of sparks and one of water. As many as 14 dancers accompanied Bieber at times, and five aerialists hung suspended from the ceiling for a tune. Hardly a song went by where at least part of the stage didn't rise up or slide down.

One song was performed from a huge trampoline suspended over the first few rows. He did one song from a glass box and another from an octagonal cage that swirled lights around its exterior.

He appeared and disappeared down so many trap doors it was hard to keep count.

There wasn't a sponta-

neous moment the whole night, other than during "As Long as You Love Me," when he called the song to a halt. "Let's take that from the top," he explained. "We messed up."

He was at his best when he dialed things down and sat on a pink love seat playing acoustic guitar (he's a lefty, by the way) to "Insecurities" and "Love Yourself."

But that's also when the largest chunk of the crowd chose to take a bathroom break so they'd be back in their seats when the bombast returned.

About that crowd: Near the end of the show, he

asked how many 11-year-olds were there. Huge response. 12-year-olds? Same thing. 13? 14? 15? The peak was somewhere around 17, although there were a few 40-year-olds (moms, presumably). The lines at the merchandise tables were endless; the lines at the bars, almost nonexistent.

Moxie Raia and Post Malone opened the show. Both were entertaining but failed to capture the crowd; a Calvin Klein underwear commercial featuring a shirtless Bieber got a much bigger cheer than either act did.

Tom Szaroleta: (904) 359-4548