

# Pair of inmates charged in jail death

Jun 2, 2015

By PAUL DAQUILANTE<br/>Of the News-Register

Two Yamhill County Jail inmates have been charged in connection with the death of fellow inmate Jed Myers, a 34-year-old McMinnville resident.

Corrections deputies discovered Myers in distress early Thursday morning. They requested McMinnville Fire Department medical personnel, but he could not be revived.

Charged in connection with the death were Zachary Michael Chronister, 20, of Sheridan, and Joshua Ian Mulbreght, 25, of Newberg. They are each facing one count of second-degree manslaughter, a Class B felony carrying the potential for a lengthy mandatory minimum prison term under Measure 11.

A grand jury will hear the case, and may consider additional charges, according to District Attorney Brad Berry. In the meantime, Chronister and Mulbreght have been relocated to other jails.

An autopsy conducted by the state medical examiner, Dr. Karen Gunson, determined Myers died of extensive internal bleeding from multiple blows to the body, Berry said. He said the manner of death was judged to be homicidal.

Myers had been taken into custody four days earlier on warrants alleging violation of terms of his probation and post-prison supervision on earlier convictions, according to Sgt. Chris Ray. Ray said he was sharing living quarters with Chronister and Mulbreght at the time.

Chronister was serving a term for violating his probation on felony convictions of failure to appear and unauthorized use of a motor vehicle.

Mulbreght was awaiting transfer to a facility in the state Department of Corrections, after being sentenced to 14 months for violating his probation on a conviction for delivery of a controlled substance/heroin, a Class A felony.

Mulbreght is also awaiting adjudication on two counts of second-degree escape, a Class C felony, and one count each of fourth-degree assault and resisting arrest, both Class A misdemeanors. The charges stem from an incident that erupted in the courtroom during circuit court proceedings.

Sheriff Tim Svenson assigned investigation of the jail death to the county's Major Crime Response Team, which reports to Berry.

“The MCRT is used to protect the integrity of the investigation,” Ray said. “This happened in our facility, so it’s good to have another set of eyes.”

The chain of events began Wednesday night, when Myers informed the staff he was experiencing an unknown medical problem. The staff responded by removing him from the general population and transferring him to a medical observation cell.

About 1 a.m. Thursday, the deputy manning the control room noticed Myers appeared to be in distress. Deputies went to check, found him unresponsive and began administering CPR.

Responding to a 911 call, fire department medics took over, but could not revive Myers. He was pronounced dead at the jail.

The other set of charges pending against Mulbreght stem from a March 30 outburst in the courtroom of Presiding Circuit Judge John Collins.

When Mulbreght was ordered into custody at the conclusion of a Drug Court hearing, he bolted. He ran over probation officer Lisa Settell, who suffered injuries to her jaw, knee and neck, and attempted to run over John Fant, who works in the county’s chemical dependency program. Fant also sustained minor injuries.

Fant said Mulbreght, bound for a door he was standing at, charged straight at him, attempting to “bowl me over.” However, Fant succeeded in forcing him to the floor and gaining the upper hand in the ensuing struggle.

The events leading up to the pair’s incarceration were described this way:

Chronister pleaded guilty in January to one count each of first-degree failure to appear and unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, in separate cases. After completing his jail time, he committed probation violations that netted him another 90 days.

After pleading guilty to a heroin dealing charge in March 2014, Mulbreght was sentenced to 30 days in jail followed by 36 months on probation. A series of post-release probation violations eventually became a 14-month prison term, which he has yet to begin serving.

Myer’s beating death was the first recorded at the Yamhill County Jail since June 2008, when Manuel Magana fatally beat Casey Healey.

Magana pleaded guilty to one count of second-degree manslaughter in November 2008. He was sentenced to 75 months in prison followed by 36 months under post-prison supervision.

Healey, 52, died at the Willamette Valley Medical Center of blunt force trauma to the head, suffered when a blow knocked him to the floor.

The Washington County Sheriff’s Office handled the investigation to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest.

