

2A SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2018 TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

## Local News



Denise Williams' attorneys will have to abide by stricter parameters than what prompted prosecutors Wednesday to file an emergency motion calling the tactic "reckless" in pushing jurors to form an opinion. ANDREW SALNERO/DEMOCRAT

## Williams' lawyers can continue to poll jurors

Karl Eiters Tallahassee Democrat  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Denise Williams' attorneys will be allowed to continue to poll potential jurors for her upcoming murder trial. But they have to abide by stricter parameters than those that prompted prosecutors Wednesday to file an emergency motion calling the tactic "reckless" in pushing jurors to form an opinion.

Williams' attorney Ethan Woy, using the Openheimer Research Group, will be allowed to elicit potential jurors' names, biographical information, whether they have formed an opinion and what they have heard about the highly publicized case.

The trial is set to begin Dec. 10. Assistant State Attorney Jon Fuchs took issue with the poll after a Leon County resident told him it was being conducted. He called the survey leader's number and posed as "Jeff Stevens."

The woman who answered identified herself as "Buffy" with the Openheimer Research Group and proceeded to ask questions related to the case against Williams, who is accused of plotting to kill her husband Mike Williams nearly 19 years ago and covering up the crime.

The woman asked a series of basic questions about the case which Fuchs said may be permitted as part of a pre-trial defense team poll. But Fuchs said the questioning crossed the line when he was asked if he'd formed an opinion regarding Williams' guilt.

"The woman gave a 'rundown of the facts of the case,' detailing parts of the investigation that have been made public through media reports."

In court Friday, Woy conceded some of the questions could cause issues with selecting a potential jury pool.

"The questions, some of the information that may have been disseminated by Openheimer is problematic," Woy told Leon Circuit Judge James Hankinson.

Woy and Fuchs agreed upon what questions could be asked. The defense attorney said he is looking to poll about 400 jurors. He and Fuchs spoke before the hearing Friday and he confirmed he hired the firm and provided the script.

Fuchs said he would like to see the results of the previous survey and how many people who received calls. He said surveying jurors was technically legal but could still affect selecting an impartial jury.

"That can be done, I'm not a fan of it, but that's what statute allow," he said. Hankinson cautioned Woy that he is responsible for the actions of the research firm.

"We're going to have to be very careful with people who are working on your behalf," Hankinson said. "They think they're doing the right thing by making things or saying things that are outside the script. But you're going to be at risk if you do that."

Contact Karl Eiters at [karteiters@tallahassee.com](mailto:karteiters@tallahassee.com) or @KarlEiters on Twitter.

## Rabies alert issued for southwest Leon County

Tallayre Waters Tallahassee Democrat  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

The Florida Department of Health is urging residents to take precautions after two raccoons tested positive for rabies in southwest Leon County, including west Tallahassee.

On Nov. 2, a raccoon was discovered at the Tallahassee Museum and transported to the Goose Creek Wildlife Sanctuary, where it began showing symptoms of being infected, said Jody McCarty, a spokeswoman for the Health Department. An examination of the raccoon's brain tested positive for rabies.

The second raccoon was discovered four days later at Mission San Luis by a resident, who recognized symptoms and used a stick to usher the raccoon into an animal carrier.

"No one was bitten or anything like that," McCarty said. The target areas for the rabies warning are north of I-10, west and south by Capital Circle Southwest and the east by North Monroe Street, but rabies activity could be outside of these areas. The health alert expires Jan. 7, 2019.

Rabies is a disease impacting the nervous system. It can be fatal to warm-blooded animals and humans, the health department reports. The only treatment for humans exposed to rabies is rabies specific immune globulin and rabies immunization.

Appropriate treatment started soon after the exposure will protect an exposed person from the disease. Contact Tallayre Waters at [rtwaters@tallahassee.com](mailto:rtwaters@tallahassee.com) or follow @TallayreWaters on Twitter.

## The Health Department issued the following tips

1 Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets and at-risk livestock.

2 Do not allow your pets to run free. Follow leash laws by keeping pets and livestock secured on your property. If your pet or livestock are bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact Leon County Health Department at 850-895-8300.

3 Support animal control in efforts to reduce feral and stray animal populations.

4 Do not handle, feed or unintentionally attract wild animals with outdoor food sources such as uncovered trash, litter or unsecured pet food.

5 I never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home.

6 Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.

7 Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas, where they might come in contact with people and pets.

8 Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and report the injury to the DOH. Leon County at 850-895-8300.

## City Commission Seat 3 recount going forward

Jeffrey Schweers Tallahassee Democrat  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

A recount in the Tallahassee City Commission Seat 3 race between Jeremy Matlow and Lisa Brown is going forward.

That's according to Leon County Supervisor of Elections Mark Farley, who made the statement after the three-person canvassing board met Friday afternoon.

According to the preliminary unofficial numbers, Matlow had 37,210 votes to Brown's 37,813, a margin of 387 votes or .458 percent. That is within the half-percent recount threshold that automatically triggers a machine recount under state law.

Ms. Brown ... has decided to proceed with the normal recount," Farley said. The canvassing board will send its results to the state Division of Elections.



City Commission Seat 3 candidates, Lisa Brown, left, and Jeremy Matlow, speak at the Tallahassee Democrat during an editorial board meeting on Oct. 30. ALICIA DEVINE/DEMOCRAT

Since by noon Saturday for an official determination. Contact Jeffrey Schweers at [jhschweers@tallahassee.com](mailto:jhschweers@tallahassee.com). Follow him on Twitter @jhschweers.

## LOCAL BRIEFS

## Cobb Middle School student detained for having steak knife

A Cobb Middle School student was detained before the start of classes Thursday morning for reportedly having a steak knife at the Hillcrest Avenue campus.

"Other students informed the School Resource Deputy and administration who were able to respond before school started. At no time were any threats made to the school or any student," said Principal Sarah Henderson in a message on the school's website.

"Safety is our number one priority, and I want to thank our parents and students for knowing they should report any and all potential issues to us. Having an SRD on campus ensures we

are always able to respond quickly to concerns as they arise."

## Tampa man dies in Liberty County crash

A 29-year-old Tampa man is dead after crashing into a tree in Liberty County Wednesday.

Rodney C. Lambert was driving south on County Road 12 near Wild Turkey Trail at about 8:30 p.m. when his 2008 Lexus left the roadway, according to the Florida Highway Patrol.

His vehicle hit a tree and he was ejected. Lambert was pronounced dead at the scene. — Tallahassee Democrat

## STATE BRIEFS

## New Jersey man dies while snorkeling in Florida Keys

KEY LARGO — Authorities said a 49-year-old New Jersey man has died while snorkeling off the Florida Keys.

Monroe County Sheriff's spokesman Adam Lindhardt said in a news release that Rodney Jinks of Westfield, N.J., last consciousness while snorkeling with his family off John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park in Key Largo on Thursday afternoon.

Lindhardt said the crew from the charter boat Encounter performed CPR. He was taken to a hospital where he was pronounced dead.

## Principal accused of taking \$900 from disabled 9-year-old

LAND O'LAKE — A Florida elementary school principal is accused of stealing \$900 from a mentally disabled 9-year-old.

The Tampa Bay Times reported 50-year-old Edward John Abernathy was arrested Thursday and charged with grand theft. A Pasco County Sheriff's Office release said deputies were told the child brought \$2,000 of his parents' money to Conception Elementary School in Land O'Lakes in October.

— Associated Press

## Corrections

To report a correction, please contact Randi Atwood, Platform Editor, 899-2148, [randiwood@tallahassee.com](mailto:randiwood@tallahassee.com)

## Florida Lottery

Results are the Florida state lottery.

## FLORIDA LOTTO

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 7 — 10-23-27-27-46-42

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