

Jury Recommends Death For Murder Convict

Margaret Allen Found Guilty Of Killing Housekeeper

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VIERA, Fla. -- A jury on Thursday recommended the death penalty for Margaret Allen, the Titusville woman found guilty of first-degree murder earlier this week in the killing of her housekeeper in February 2005.

After about two hours of deliberations in the penalty phase of Allen trial, the 12-member jury came back with an unanimous 12-0 verdict, recommending the death penalty.

Under Florida law, the jury's advisory sentence does not have to be unanimous. Judge George Maxwell will now decide on Allen's fate after he ponders the jury's advisory sentence, Local 6 News partner Florida Today reported.

A hearing will be held sometime in the next month or so before the judge, in which prosecutors and the defense attorney will once again make the case for and against the death penalty for Allen. At that time, family members of the victim might also speak in front of the judge.

Allen, 44, was found guilty earlier this week in the February 2005 killing of Wenda Wright in Titusville. Allen suspected Wright of stealing a purse containing \$2,000 and beat and tortured her before burying her in a shallow grave in north Brevard with the help of two men, according to court testimony.

The men received plea deals from the state in exchange for testifying against Allen.

Closing arguments in the penalty phase of Allen's trial were completed by 10:30 a.m. Thursday. In his argument, prosecutor Russ Bausch described to jurors how Wright was tortured and killed by Allen.

"Heinous, atrocious, cruel," Bausch said.

He described how Wright must have gasped for breath as she was being choked. "Those are the last few moments of Wenda Wright's life," Bausch said.

Defense attorney Frank Bankowitz said his client acted the way she did because she suffered from brain damage and is not able to control her emotions.

"My client has brain damage, there is no question about it," Bankowitz said.

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