

Murder suspect Bobby Petty scheduled to go on trial Tuesday in Circuit Court

Written by George Browning
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The trial of Robert F. "Bobby" Petty over the death of his ex-wife, Nina Rae Keown, in 2010 was scheduled to begin on Tuesday morning, January 29, in Scott Circuit Court.

A number of prospective jurors were ordered to appear that morning so that the selection process, known as voir dire, may begin. A special judge, Judge Frank Newkirk Jr. of Salem, is presiding over proceedings.

Petty is charged with Class A felony murder and two Class D felonies, removal of a body from scene (of a crime) and obstruction of justice.

He is accused of having killed Nina, a petite, 26-year-old blonde, after the two had attended a music event near Petty's mobile home on the night of August 7, 2010. Petty later told authorities searching for Nina that he had last seen her after the pair argued and she got off the ATV on which they were riding and walked into an adjacent cornfield as they were traveling back to his trailer.

His story launched a widespread hunt for the woman in that area of Scott County, which lasted several weeks.

In its case, the State alleges that Petty instead killed Nina in his bed. He then allegedly unclothed the body and took it to a remote road in Jefferson County southeast of New Washington, where he purportedly dropped it into a small, roadside ravine.

His charges also cover another alleged act, burning the mattress, the woman's clothing and other items in a bonfire on a relative's property.

Petty was arrested on a non-related outstanding Clark County warrant several days after his ex-wife went missing. While he was detained in jail on that charge in Jeffersonville, he reportedly confessed his involvement in Nina's disappearance to John Lizenby, who was then serving as sheriff of Scott County.

His story purportedly led to the recovery of the woman's decomposed body by Sheriff Lizenby and others 20 days after she had disappeared. Criminal charges against Petty were filed by Prosecutor Jason Mount on September 29, 2010.

An Habitual Offender charge is also part of the murder case against Petty. If determined to be an Habitual Offender, Petty could find up to 30 years added to any term of imprisonment he may receive if found guilty in the murder trial.

A separate weapons charge, possession of a firearm by a serious violent felon, is also pending against Petty. The weapons charge is based on officers finding a gun in Petty's closet at his home. Though set for trial at one time, the weapons charge has not been rescheduled on the court's calendar.

Petty has been held in jail since his original arrest in 2010.

His trial has been delayed over the years because of changes in counsel and a motion that provided the special judge. Petty was unsuccessful in his requests to prevent anyone from referring to the "complaining witness," Nina Keown, as a "victim" and that he not be referred to as the "defendant."

Though he began with local public defenders representing him through his several court appearances, Petty is now represented by a Corydon attorney, Brian Chastain, who is serving as his public defender. Prosecutor Mount and his staff will represent the State of Indiana. The trial could take a week or more to conclude.