

Sex offenders to get boot

New park to make Town West-area motels off limits

By DAVID SCHULTE
World Staff Writer

SAPULPA — Police soon will notify dozens of registered sex offenders that they must move from a cluster of motels near the Town West shopping center.

The City Council approved a \$10,000 contract Monday night to buy about half an acre from the owner of Cherokee Hose & Supply Co., 5240 W. Skelly Drive, for a city park.

The property sits northeast of the motels, which have served as a safe haven for sex offenders, who are required by state law to live outside a 2,000-foot radius of schools, parks, playgrounds and child-care facilities.

With the creation of the new park, the motels will be within that zone.

In an interview before Monday's City Council meeting, Police Capt. Mike Haefner said about 60 registered sex offenders live in motels near the shopping center.

According to the Sapulpa Police Department's Sex Offender Registry, those motels include Interstate Inn Express, 5554 S. 48th West Ave.; Rest Inn, 5508 W.

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Skelly Drive; Gateway Motel Hotel, 5600 W. Skelly Drive; and American Value Inn, 5125 W. Skelly Drive.

City Attorney David Widdoes was asked during the meeting whether the sex offenders who already live in the motels would have to move, because they were living there before the land was purchased for a park.

Widdoes replied that he believes that state law does not consider motels to be a permanent place of residency.

"You cannot have residency in motel rooms," he told the council.

City Manager Tom DeArman was asked how soon registered sex offenders would be expected to move from the motels.

"As soon as the park is operating, they will be notified to vacate," he said, adding that the park should be open by Nov. 1.

Haefner said the Police Department has been working with the Tulsa County District Attorney's Office about what steps to take once the city acquires property for the park.

The motels are in Tulsa County.

"How quickly we will move will depend upon the input and guidance from the District Attorney's Office," Haefner said.

He said registered sex offenders living in the motels most likely would have 45 to 60 days to move after receiving a certified letter from the District Attorney's Office.

"We understand that these people need to find a place that is reasonable and within the law," Haefner said.

Not everyone believes that the sex offender law is reasonable.

Michael Chase, a registered sex offender who lives at Interstate Inn, said lawsuits need to be filed to challenge Oklahoma laws that severely limit where sex offenders can live.

Chase, who was convicted of indecent exposure, said in a recent interview: "That's straight up persecution. The only reason they are building a park is to drive sex offenders from this area."

"If they let something like this go, they are basically telling us to go straight to hell."

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Name of slaying victim released

► The city has recorded 50 homicides this year, with four killings coming in the last week.

By NICOLE MARSHALL
World Staff Writer

Police have released the name of a man who was found stabbed to death at an apartment complex Sunday afternoon.

Carl Allen, 53, was pronounced dead just after 3 p.m. Sunday at the scene of the attack at the Barclay apartment complex, 1226 S. St. Louis Ave.

The motive for the attack remains under investigation.

Detective Kevin Hill said investigators are following leads but that they had no additional suspect information to release Monday.

Allen's death is the 50th homicide investigated by Tulsa police this year and the fourth within a week.

On Saturday, police investigated an unrelated homicide after a man's body was found in a grassy area near an apartment complex in the 3100 block of South 108th

East Avenue.

Police were called to the complex about 7:30 a.m., Officer Jason Willingham said.

The victim, who was identified as Scott Jason Curtis, 29, was pronounced dead at the scene.

His car, which was found in the apartment complex, had been damaged by gunfire, but initial reports did not indicate whether the shots came from inside or outside the car.

"It is possible that he was shot in the car and then fled," Willingham said.

Curtis lived near 31st Street and Memorial Drive, police records show.

Authorities are also continuing to investigate the motive for his homicide.

Detectives also investigated two other unrelated homicides last week, one Tuesday and one Thursday. Suspects have been arrested in connection with those cases.

Anyone with information about the killings is asked to call Crime Stoppers at 596-COPS. Callers can be anonymous, and the Crime Commission offers rewards for information leading to arrests.

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Immigration is focus of forum

► With a new state law on illegal immigration looming, panelists weigh its effects.

By ALTHEA PETERSON
World Staff Writer

With less than two months until Oklahoma's new immigration law takes effect, four panelists tried to answer questions Monday night about the past and future of illegal immigration in the United States.

House Bill 1804 is set to take effect Nov. 1. Among other things, it will end most public assistance for illegal immigrants, authorize state and local law enforcement officials to enforce federal immigration law, penalize employers for knowingly hiring illegal immigrants, and penalize anyone who knowingly transports or harbors illegal immigrants.

About 100 people attended Monday's panel discussion, titled "Is America Still a Melting

Pot?" Held at All Souls Unitarian Church, it was sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Tulsa, the Oklahoma Conference for Community and Justice, and the Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry.

As an attorney who specializes in immigration law and a recently naturalized U.S. citizen from England, panelist Campbell Cooke said he is neither for nor against HB 1804. However, he understands how it affects others, he said.

"I have employers coming to me saying they can't find workers because we have a labor force fleeing Oklahoma and moving to New Mexico, Missouri or Canada," Cooke said.

"We have an ever-diminishing pool of talented workers, so companies will either close or move offshore."

Panelist Elizabeth McCormick, a University of Tulsa associate professor of law, said that although much of the ille-

gal immigration is being attributed to Hispanic people, history shows that this was not always the case in the United States.

Italian, French and Chinese immigrants are among those targeted in the past, she said.

"I'm not in favor of illegal immigration, and I think we need a solution," McCormick said. "It's about recognizing that this is a problem that will not go away if we don't change and don't address it."

Panelist Maria Palacios, vice chairwoman of the Tulsa Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, said it is difficult to speak out on the issue. She said that although she supports secure borders and wants fair immigration reform, it is sometimes difficult to see and hear the comments some Tulsans have aimed at Hispanics in the wake of HB 1804's passage.

"I have been living here for 27 years, and I have never felt as such a foreigner and such

an alien as I do today," said Palacios, who originally is from Venezuela. "It is sickening to read their comments that our little Tulsa, beautiful Tulsa, is becoming a Nazi Germany. That's what I call it."

Another panelist, Rep. Jeanne McDaniel, D-Tulsa, said the solution will come not from HB 1804 but from everyone contributing ideas toward the common goal of easing legal immigration and safe border control.

McDaniel said she voted for an earlier version of HB 1804 because it focused on employers but later voted against the revised bill, which she said focuses on people who cannot defend themselves.

"I think my grandchildren deserve to live in a world without hate," she said. "I oppose House Bill 1804 because I think we can do better, and with your help I know we can do better."

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Judge blocks new video game law

► She says the law, which would ban the sale of violent games to minors, infringes on free speech.

By TIM TALLEY
Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — A federal judge permanently enjoined the state on Monday from enforcing a law that would ban the sale of violent video games to minors, ruling that it is an unconstitutional infringement on free speech.

U.S. District Judge Robin Cauthron said there is no support or "substantial evidence" that video games are harmful to minors and that "there is a complete dearth of legislative findings, scientific studies or other rationale to support passage of the act."

The video game legislation was passed by the Legislature last year and signed into law by Gov. Brad Henry. It barred retailers from selling video games that include "inappropriate" or "gratuitous" violence to minors.

It was challenged in a lawsuit filed in October by the Entertainment Software Association, whose members accounted for more than 90 percent of the \$7.4 billion in entertainment software sold in the U.S. in 2006, the ESA's Web site states.

The law was scheduled to go into effect Nov. 1, 2006, but Cauthron blocked its enforcement shortly after the lawsuit was filed.

Cauthron's ruling addressed the issue of computer and video games' interactivity, the ESA said. Cauthron found that "the presence of increased viewer control and interactivity does not remove

these games from the release of First Amendment protection."

The court also ruled that the law was underinclusive because a minor who is prevented from buying a video game with "inappropriate violence" may still legally buy or rent the book or movie on which the game was based.

Oklahoma is the latest state to have its video game law struck down, the ESA said.

At least six courts in other states have struck down similar laws.

"We need to move past unconstitutional attempts to circumvent Oklahoma citizens' rights," Michael D. Gallagher, president of the ESA, said in a statement.

"This bill was clearly unconstitutional, and we now need to develop a public/private partnership that meets concerned parents' needs."

The law, House Bill 3004,

was sponsored by former Rep. Fred Morgan, R-Oklahoma City, and Senate co-President Pro Tem Glenn Coffee, R-Oklahoma City.

Neither Morgan nor Coffee returned telephone calls from The Associated Press seeking comment on the court's action.

After the lawsuit was filed, Morgan accused the industry of challenging state restrictions "without being responsible enough to work with legislators to try to solve the problem."

Industry officials said the games are rated and that retailers have committed to enforcing ratings restrictions.

"State officials and policymakers should work together with our industry to educate parents about game ratings and the parental controls available on all new video game consoles," Gallagher said.

TPS self-insured health plan is rejected

By ANDREA EGER
World Staff Writer

Tulsa Public Schools employees and retirees have rejected a proposal to adopt a self-insured health plan, officials said Monday.

Of the 3,272 people who participated in a telephone poll conducted by an outside firm, 2,044 — or 62 percent — voted to continue participating in the health plan overseen by the Oklahoma State and Education Employees Group Insurance Board, said Joanne Lu-

cas, the school district's chief financial officer.

About 7,800 TPS employees and retirees who retired after May 1, 1993, would not have been able to choose state insurance if the proposal to pool insurance premiums and have an employee committee oversee them had succeeded.

"Now we just stay with the state," Lucas said. "This was a goal" of Superintendent Michael Zolkoski's "to have a more affordable plan for employees and a plan that we

could impact the rates on by implementing a wellness program."

Zolkoski still would like to implement a wellness program, with screenings for early detection of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, breast cancer, etc., but officials are unsure how to fund it now.

The district already had made arrangements for the screenings with a third-party health insurance administrator with the goal of further re-

ducing employees' insurance costs, Lucas explained.

"I don't think we'll give up on the idea of screenings, but it will be harder to bring in the screenings for little or no cost, because we won't have that partnership with a third-party (health insurance) administrator," she said.

"And it's not going to have any impact on the insurance rates our personnel pay."

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