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Debrae Sheldon's mother, Sandra Eastman, darts toward Dennis Duby at the end of Monday's court hearing.

Protesters: State agency accountable for killing

By BRANT CURTIS

Phyllis Sheldon has no doubt that her grand daughter would still be alive if she had been kept away from the mother who abused her. "She was safe living with her aunt," Sheldon said Monday. "The state Department for Children and Family Services needs to be held accountable for putting her back in a house with monsters."



Debrae Sheldon

Duby denies murder charge

By BRANT CURTIS

A Postney man on Monday denied killing his 2-year-old stepdaughter in a case that has sparked a firestorm of emotion. Dennis Duby pleaded innocent to second-degree murder in a Rutland criminal courtroom packed with people who turned out to support Debrae Sheldon, who was pronounced dead on Friday, days after her second birthday on Feb. 16.



Dennis Duby, accused of murder in the second degree following the death of his 2-year-old stepdaughter Debrae Sheldon, is escorted into Rutland criminal court on Monday.

But was set at \$250,000 for the 30-year-old, who faces a minimum 20-year sentence and potential lifetime sentence if convicted of the killing. Before the hearing ended, chaos erupted in the courtroom when Debrae's mother, Sandra Eastman, charged the defense table screaming "What did you do to my (step)daughter baby?" Eastman was intercepted by court officers who were

to be held accountable, no criminal charges have been brought against her and court records filed by Vermont State Police investigators indicate the mother wasn't at her College Street home in Postney when the toddler was fatally injured. Duby told investigators that he believed the child had fallen off a table and said he'd seen her fall from a toilet and a sink on the afternoon of Feb. 16.

But observers who met Debrae at Rutland Regional Medical Center and three-month-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H., told police they suspected the child was abused. A doctor at RRMG told police that CT scans of the girl revealed skull fractures to both sides of her head suggesting "that someone held her head so tight, her skull cracked." But while those in the crowd called for Eastman

to be held accountable, a large group of family members, friends and other concerned citizens said Monday that the state agency was too quick to return the helpless child to an environment where she'd been abused in the past. Carrying signs with slogans such as "Who is protecting the children?" dozens of protesters lined the sidewalk outside the Rutland office building that houses the local branch of DCF. "The message we want to get out is: Do your job. Protect these kids," Phyllis Sheldon said. "Don't give kids back to abusive parents. Don't put them back in that environment." In Debrae's case, she was removed from her mother's custody in March 2013 after the 11-month-old child was brought to the hospital with fractures to both legs. Eastman pleaded guilty in July to a misdemeanor offense of child abuse and was sentenced to two years of probation and mandatory violence counseling for anger management. Soon after Eastman was charged, Debrae was placed in the custody of her aunt, Patricia Hodson, who cared for her during the next seven months. But before the start of the new year, the child was returned to her mother over the objections of both her biological father's family and

Parking ticket scofflaws' names might be published

By GORDON BRITSCHKO

expanding the city's powers to boot cars, getting the state involved in collections and publishing lists of scofflaws. No formal action was taken, but there was a request for Wilson to return to the committee with a list of anyone who has three or more unpaid tickets and off-in-park tickets that were at least seven years old. She and Ordinance Committee should review the city's book board might want to move

Alderman Sharon Davis said she did not want to send a message that people could get away with not paying a parking ticket in Rutland simply by waiting it out. Wilson said that the city had \$292,000 in unpaid tickets. A seven-year wait-off would remove \$292,000 of that, she said, while only going back \$144,616. Five years would remove \$144,616. Alderwoman Sharon Davis said she did not want to send a message that

people could get away with not paying a parking ticket in Rutland simply by waiting it out, and that she did not think all the outstanding tickets were from out-of-stateers the city could not track down. "I think we need to see the list of who they are and I think they need to be published," she said. "It makes you look like

to send a message that people could get away with not paying a parking ticket in Rutland simply by waiting it out, and that she did not think all the outstanding tickets were from out-of-stateers the city could not track down. "I think we need to see the list of who they are and I think they need to be published," she said. "It makes you look like

Female robber strikes again

STAFF REPORT

Vermont State Police responded to a reported armed robbery at Family Dollar in West Rutland Monday night. According to broadcast over police broadband radio, a lone female entered the store at around 8:30 p.m. and displayed a handgun. Officers with police dogs were at the scene, but the information heard on the scanner could not be confirmed with police by deadline Monday night. Police have said they suspect a female in two other robberies in Rutland County in the past week.



Police released this image of a female suspect robbing a convenience store in Duxbury on Saturday night. On Monday police were investigating another armed robbery in West Rutland. They suspect the robber also to be female.

Lockdown of prison with Vermont inmates ends

By BETH GARIBOLDI

lockdown lasted until Feb. 4, with prisoners allowed to access day rooms for no more than four hours daily. Most prison lockdowns last about three days, Vermont Department of Corrections said there are plans to change the full lockdown process in Vermont by about three weeks. Vermont houses prisoners in two facilities out of state due to space issues and financial considerations. About 10 inmates from the state were moved to facilities back in

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