

Attorneys spar over evidence in Holland case

Prosecution to release items for defense analysis

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

New details surrounding what may have happened to Ricky Holland's body after he died emerged Tuesday as attorneys haggled over evidence during a pretrial hearing for the boy's parents.

The 7-year-old's remains may have been placed in a blue tub before they were dumped in a marshlike area in rural Ingham County, according to statements made at the hearing. Tim Holland led police to his adopted son's remains - found wrapped in a sheet inside plastic garbage bags - nearly seven months after the boy was reported missing.

Tim and Lisa Holland, of Williamston, are charged with murder and child abuse in Ricky's death.

In an often-heated exchange Tuesday, Assistant Prosecutor Mike Ferency said it appeared Lisa Holland's attorneys were concealing evidence they discovered during their own investigation.

"Trace evidence is being held by the defense," he said.

Ingham County Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield ruled a defense expert could analyze the garbage bags that held the boy's remains, as well as other items authorities have not yet turned over.

Those bags apparently could show that Ricky's remains had been in a blue tub.

Manderfield said authorities have to turn over the evidence by 5 p.m. Friday or the evidence would be suppressed at trial. Items requested include X-rays and CT-scans of the remains, as well as a hair sample.

Lisa Holland's co-counsel Mike Nichols said afterward that having an independent examination of evidence is crucial for their case. "We need to determine whether, and how, to challenge expert opinion," he said.

Judge: Siblings won't testify

None of Ricky Holland's four brothers and sisters, who range in age from 2 to 4, will testify as eyewitnesses in Tim and Lisa Holland's trials, Ingham County Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield ruled Tuesday.

"They're not victims in this matter," Manderfield said.

That ruling came after a request by Lisa Holland's attorneys to question the children about what they saw, or didn't see, on the night authorities say Ricky was killed.

A forensics expert retained by Lisa Holland's attorneys has already been reviewing evidence, according to statements made Tuesday in court.

Also Tuesday, Manderfield said she would consider a joint defense request to pay for two experts to examine blood evidence. Those experts, from Okemos-based Speckin Forensic Laboratories, could cost the county \$18,000.

Tim Holland's co-counsel Frank Reynolds said in court that the testimony was necessary to challenge prosecution witnesses in an area of forensic science - blood stain analysis - he said is controversial. "(We) cannot be effective without the assistance of expert analysis," he said.

Manderfield last week ordered an investigation to determine how much money the court might approve for defense experts.

Additional pretrial hearings have not yet been scheduled.