

The Eagle-Tribune

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GAME OF CHANCE

Brady scores five TDs as Haverhill romps over Methuen.

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Charges dropped for two in home invasion



ANGIE BEAULIEU/Staff file photo

Jonas Rogers, 25, center, of Haverhill was arraigned Aug. 1 in Haverhill District Court in connection with a July 23 home invasion on River Street in which two people were killed.

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HAVERHILL — Charges have been dismissed against two men who were linked by police to two shooting deaths in a home invasion on River Street in July.

The cases against Jonas Rogers, charged in the deaths of William Melchionda and Anddy Guzman, and Matthew Rogers, no relation, who was charged with being an accessory after the fact and misleading a police

investigation, were dismissed yesterday when the Essex District Attorney's Office said it was not prepared to proceed with probable cause hearings.

The charges against Jonas Rogers, 25, of Haverhill were dismissed in Haverhill District Court at the request of his lawyer, Arthur Kelly of Newton.

"The state had no evidence to put forward, they did not request another date, and in return I asked

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INVASION: Charges dismissed against two men

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that they dismiss the case and they did," Kelly told The Eagle-Tribune following yesterday's hearing. "It's clear to me that Jonas Rogers was wrongfully charged in this case, and fortunately today the case was rightfully dismissed."

Rogers was arrested and charged with murder on July 31, eight days after the shootings, and ordered held without bail.

At the time, police said people they interviewed told them Jonas Rogers spoke after the shootings about being involved in the home invasion. At a hearing on Sept. 27, he was released on personal recognizance, as the district attorney's office asked the court for more time to present evidence to a grand jury seeking an indictment against him.

In the case against Matthew Rogers, 26, of 1068 Essex St., Lawrence, police said he gave Juan Carlos Sanchez of Lawrence, who was indicted on murder charges in the deaths earlier this week, a ride at one point after the shootings to help Sanchez avoid police who were tracking him.

"Based on the investigation, we felt that it was in the best interest of justice to dismiss the charges against him," Essex District Attorney spokeswoman Carrie Kimball-Monahan said about Matthew Rogers. She refused to give more details about the reason for the dismissal.

Police said that on the night of July 23, four people were shot; two died and the other two taken to a Boston hospital for non-life-threatening injuries.



PAUL BILÔDEAU/Staff photo

Matthew Rogers, 26, of 1068 Essex St., Lawrence is arraigned in Haverhill District Court in Haverhill yesterday.

The shootings occurred in Melchionda's ground-floor apartment at 629-635 River St., police said. According to court documents, three masked men entered Melchionda's apartment sometime between 10 and 10:30 that night. Police reports show the invaders' motive was their belief illegal drugs and a large amount of cash were being kept there.

Earlier this week, an Essex County Grand Jury indicted three people on murder and other charges in connection with the incident.

Juan Carlos Sanchez, 20, of Lawrence and Joshua Cloutman, 20, and Angela Walsh, 21, both of 631 River St., were each indicted on two counts of murder. They were also indicted on charges of home invasion, armed robbery and armed burglary, and assault on an occupant. In addition, Sanchez was indicted on two counts of armed assault with intent to murder.

Sanchez was arrested July 29 and arraigned July 30 in Haverhill District Court, where he pleaded not guilty to charges that included two

counts of murder. Judge Patricia Dowling ordered Sanchez held without bail on a previous, drug-related probation violation and continued the shooting case. He continues to be held without bail.

Cloutman and Walsh were arrested Aug. 6 on accessory before the fact and witness intimidation charges. At their arraignments Aug. 7 in Haverhill District Court, Judge Michael Uhlarik ordered them held on \$20,000 cash bail each. They are still in custody and are expected to be arraigned on the new charges in Salem Superior Court in a few weeks, Kimball-Monahan said.

Police said Guzman, 20, of Lawrence was one of the men who invaded the home and was accidentally shot by Sanchez during the violent struggle. Guzman was found outside the home with a fatal gunshot wound. He was wearing a black mask and had an empty pistol holster, police said. Sanchez told a witness interviewed by police that he mistakenly shot Guzman, according to

police reports.

Cloutman and Walsh, who police said lived in an upstairs apartment with their child and Cloutman's mother, were charged with helping to plan the home invasion in exchange for some of the marijuana the home invaders planned to steal from Melchionda's apartment, police said. The young couple called and texted one of the gunmen from their shared cell phone numerous times in the days and hours leading up to the deadly intrusion, police said.

Kimball-Monahan said that during yesterday's court hearing, Essex Assistant District Attorney Melissa Woodard indicated her office was not prepared to go forward with a probable cause hearing against Jonas Rogers.

"There are no open charges against Jonas Rogers in connection with the River Street shootings," Kimball-Monahan said after the hearing.

The Grand Jury investigation into the shootings, however, remains open, she said.

"He spent a month in jail on charges that have now been dismissed," Kelly said of Jonas Rogers. "My client was elated at the outcome of the case and left the courtroom with members of his family."

Kimball-Monahan said this week's indictments of Sanchez, Cloutman and Walsh move their cases from district court to superior court, which has jurisdiction over murder charges. A grand jury is a 23-member group that meets in secret, weighs evidence and testimony, and then decides if it rises to a level sufficient to indict or bring a criminal charge.