SENTENCING

Continued from 1A

with Morgan was nearly abducted, but was able to get away.

The van was found abandoned on July 27, 1996, in the parking lot of a truck stop in Williamson County, Tennessee, and Morgan's body was found Oct. 20, 1996 in a wooded area in White House, Tennessee.

DNA testing on hairs found in the van led to the discovery of a DNA profile matching Froberg's, and earlier this year Froberg confessed to abducting Morgan and using a handkerchief to strangle her.

Froberg then stripped Morgan's clothing and discarded her body, according to law enforcement, who learned that Froberg was an escaped prisoner from facilities in Alabama and Pennsylvania at the time of the abduction and that the van he was driving had been stolen from Ohio.

In a sentencing memorandum filed Oct. 21, First Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian Butler said that imposing a life sentence will bring an end to the legal proceedings and represents an appropriate punishment.

"For thirty years, Morgan's family and friends lived with their heartbreak and the anxiety of an unknown terror that robbed them of Morgan," Butler said in the memorandum. "Morgan's father suffered the additional indignity of being falsely accused of having a role in Morgan's disappearance. Parents throughout southcentral Kentucky parented differently based upon a nagging fear and anxiety that their child could be the next Morgan Violi ... the severity of life-changing ramifications stemming from Froberg's crime cannot be overstated."

The offense to which Froberg pleaded guilty carries statutory penalties of either life in prison or the death penalty.

There is no parole in the federal prison system, and Butler said in the filing that the protracted litigation process in a death penalty case, typically marked by several appeals, was contrary to the wishes of Morgan's family and "would have prevented the legal chapter of this nightmare from closing expeditiously."

Like other convicted federal defendants, Froberg underwent a presentencing investigation by the federal Probation and Parole department, giving a detailed interview about his life history and background so that a judge has as much information as possible to determine an appropriate sentence.

While the report from that investigation is sealed, some details have come out in filings from Butler and federal public defender Pat Bouldin, Froberg's attorney.

According to Butler's sentencing memorandum, Froberg "apparently had an idyllic childhood," raised with his sister by a stay-at-home mother and a father who served in the U.S. Air Force.

Froberg reportedly described his family as close and caring for one another.

"Despite these advantages, Froberg chose to live a life of destruction and crime," Butler stated in his memorandum, which detailed an armed robbery Froberg committed as a juvenile in Indianapolis, a conviction at age 19 for grand theft auto in Florida and another armed robbery conviction in Alabama at age 24.

The crime in Alabama led to a 40-year prison sentence for Froberg, which is what he was serving when he escaped in 1996 and made his way to Pennsylvania, where he was then arrested on suspicion of attempting to abduct a child.

Froberg escaped from a Pennsylvania jail and was still at large when Morgan was abducted.

"Beginning as a teenager, Froberg left nothing but terror and violence in his wake," Butler's memorandum said. "The United States is unaware of a single redeeming contribution that Froberg has made to society. While life in prison is an incredibly harsh sentence, it is hard to envision someone more deserving of spending every last day of their life in federal prison than Robert Scott Froberg."

Bouldin's sentencing memorandum, filed on Oct. 22, noted that Froberg left school in ninth grade and earned a GED while in custody, and has struggled with substance abuse since age 13, completing treatment programs while incarcerated.

Froberg suffered a foot injury from a gunshot wound in 1988, has chronic pain from a hip replacement and also has chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder.

At court proceedings, Froberg has been brought into the courtroom in a wheelchair.

"(Froberg) has been diagnosed with depression, and attempted suicide by cutting his arms after learning of this investigation," Bouldin stated in his memorandum.

Bouldin has asked that Froberg serve out his sentence at a medical facility within the federal Bureau of Prisons due to his age and medical problems.

"The offense is grave, and Mr. Froberg does not minimize it," Bouldin said in his filing. "He has admitted his conduct, pleaded guilty quickly and is truly remorseful for his actions."

POLICE

Continued from 1A

for information on the phone spanning the time frame of Aug. 29 to Sept. 29.

Warren District Court Judge Kim Geoghegan authorized the search warrant on Sept. 30.

An affidavit sworn by Vaughn in support of his request for the warrant disclosed some details that police had learned in the early stages of the investigation.

The affidavit details that the shooting of Phillips was documented on the trooper's in-car camera, and that Phillips had stopped the car for having an expired temporary tag.

Investigators learned that the tag belonged to a different vehicle registered to a woman with an Alabama address, but police learned after searching through databases that the woman currently lived in Portland, Tennessee, and that Branch was a known associate of hers.

Police checked vehicle registrations in Tennessee and found out that a 2017 Honda Civic was registered to Branch, matching the description of the car involved in the shooting.



Kentucky State Police Trooper Hayden Phillips

The woman confirmed the Civic belonged to Branch, and police were present when she called Branch and asked why he was using her temporary tag, with Branch hanging up on her, according to Vaughn's affidavit.

The woman then received a call from a person identified as "Ski" who told her that he had spoken to Branch and learned from him that he was on the run, the affidavit stated.

Police used law enforcement databases to locate a phone number for Branch, and emergency pings of Branch's cell phone enabled police to locate him in Jefferson County, where he was arrested and police took custody of the Civic.

"During processing of the Honda Civic an Apple iPhone was located inside along with two spent shell casings and suspected narcotics inside of a Cheetos bag," Vaughn stated in the affidavit.

Vaughn said that three small bags of white powder suspected to be cocaine were found in the Cheetos bag, and a digital scale and additional small plastic bags were also found in the car.

"Based on the amount and location of suspected narcotics, digital scales, drug paraphernalia, including baggies, (Police have) probable cause to believe and does believe that Branch was engaged in drug trafficking," Vaughn stated in the affidavit.

Though Branch is not charged with any drug offenses, Vaughn requested the cell phone on the basis that his prior training and experience has shown him that people engaged in drug trafficking use cell phones to communicate with others to buy and sell drugs, records show.

Branch's next court date is Feb. 12.



JACK DOBBS / DAILY NEWS

The first visitors arrive at Bowling Green's Riverfront Park for an opening ceremony for phase one of the park on Wednesday.

BG

Continued from 1A

$750,000 for phase one was awarded in 2020, and a city match of $1.5 million paved the way for its creation.

Wednesday's event was supported with coffee and refreshments for guests, games for kids were set up in grassy areas and after the ribbon was cut, a band performed a rendition of the Everly Brothers song, "Bowling Green."

"I hope today begins a story for each and every one of you to tell many years from now about this special place," Meisel said.

Columbus, Ohio-based architectural firm MKSK has handled design needs for the park from the beginning, and has worked on various community engagement efforts as the park concept develops.

Speaking Wednesday, MKSK's Andy Knight was not surprised by the sizable crowd in attendance.

"Bowling Green comes out and they show up, and that's been super helpful for our team," he said. "This is just the tip of the iceberg."

"It was amazing to see people start to interact with the park and see the vision for Riverfront Park come to life."

Brent Childers

Neighborhood and Community Services

Another piece of that iceberg was celebrated Wednesday as officials also broke ground on phase two of the park. Phase two will encompass a large playground area situated right behind phase one, a playground that officials have said will be unlike anything else in the region once completed.

Phase two will occupy roughly one acre and will sit at the back of the main 71-acre lot housing Riverfront Park. The play area consists of a large, flower-shaped area and nearby is a "plinth," consisting of two levels that feature slides and other play areas. The whole playground is designed to have a cave theme, with cave formation features dotting the area.

Other amenities include a food truck park and a performance lawn akin to the grassy area used for concerts in Circus Square Park. Completion for this portion is eyed for next fall.

"It was amazing to see people start to interact with the park and see the vision for Riverfront Park come to life," Neighborhood and Community Services head Brent Childers, who has led the project since its inception, told the Daily News after the ceremony. "Phase 2 brings play to Riverfront Park and I am excited to see families enjoy the unique play features that we have planned."

WARREN

Continued from 1A

Westen St.;

• Michael O. Buchanon Park, 9222 Nashville Road;

• Phil Moore Park, 7101 Scottsville Road;

• Richardsville Community Center, 1775 Richardsville Road;

• Smiths Grove Methodist Church, 333 N. Main St. in Smiths Grove;

• State Street Baptist Church, 340 State St.;

• Sugar Maple Square, 1347 Ky. 185;

• Warren Central High, 559 Morgantown Road, and;

• Warren County Coop Ext, 5162 Russellville Road.

Voters must present a form of photo identification when arriving to vote. Accepted forms include driver's licenses, ID's issued by local, state or federal government, the military or a college or university.

A sample ballot for Warren County can be found online. For more election day information, visit https://warrencountyclerk.ky.gov/.

Warren County property owners have until Sunday, Nov. 1 to receive a 2% discount on property taxes for 2026, with a payment deadline set for Thursday, Dec. 31.



JACK DOBBS / DAILY NEWS

A voter casts their ballot in the 2026 primary election inside a voting center at State Street Baptist Church on Tuesday, May 19.

"As long as you pay by 11/1, and it's postmarked by 11/1, then you would get the 2% discounted rate," Warren County Sheriff Brett Hightower said during Thursday's fiscal court meeting.

Hightower said those planning to pay by mail should have their envelopes postmarked locally before mailing payments out.

Payments arriving that are postmarked after Nov. 1 will not be eligible for the discount, with payers needing to pay the full face amount starting Nov. 2.

Payments can be dropped off at the sheriff's office as well, and those that are dropped over the weekend and collected Monday morning will be eligible for the discount.

Tax bills can also be paid online with a bank account number, with a $1.50 for processing.

Credit and debit card payments are also accepted, but this come with a 2.5% processing fee. WCSO does not accept American Express for payments.

Taxes can be paid in person at WCSO's business office located at Sugar Maple Square, located at 1347 Ky. 185. Tax bills cannot be paid at the Warren County Courthouse.

Payments made after Dec. 31 will have a 5% penalty and those made between Feb. 1 and April 15 will have a 21% penalty.

Fiscal court will convene again Nov. 12.