

Mother wants to visit baby left in trash

Judge orders 28-year-old woman to stand trial on attempted murder charge

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A Las Vegas woman accused of dumping her newborn daughter in a trash bin now wants permission to visit the baby, her attorney said Monday.

The request elicited snickers from some observers in Justice of the Peace James Bixler's courtroom, and Deputy Public Defender Robert Thompson said his client understands why public sentiment might not be on her side.

"That just wasn't the location you'd want to see a baby put in," Thompson said after the hearing.

Bixler set bail at \$50,000 on Monday for the mother, Monique Tucker, but said he has no authority to rule on the woman's request for visitation.

The judge also ordered Tucker, 28, to stand trial on a charge of attempted murder. He made the ruling after four witnesses testified at a preliminary hearing.

Lopresti said he looked inside the bin and saw a shoe box, then lifted the lid on the box to discover a baby wrapped in a plastic bag.

He said he immediately picked up the box and took it to his supervisor's apartment about 20 to 30 feet away.

The supervisor's wife, Jennifer Augustine-McKillop,

Albert Lopresti, a groundskeeper at the Silver Shadow Vistas apartments, testified that he was cleaning the area around a trash bin around 8 a.m. on Aug. 6 when he heard a noise that drew him closer.

"I wasn't sure if it was a baby or a kitten, to tell you the truth," he said.

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Monique Tucker, accused of leaving her baby in a trash bin, appears Monday at her Justice Court preliminary hearing with her attorney, Deputy Public Defender Robert Thompson.

► **BABY:** Specialist says Tucker knew of safe-haven law

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opened the door. The woman, still visibly shaken by the incident, testified Monday about her reaction to what she saw in Lopresti's hands.

"I just looked at it and screamed, 'It's a baby in a box! It's a baby in a box!'" the witness said.

Augustine-McKillop said she gave her husband the box and dialed 911. She said she then took the baby out of the plastic bag, which was covered with blood, and wrapped it in a towel.

"It was very ashen," she said. "It was just kind of lethargic."

The woman, a mother of two, said her husband tied off the baby's umbilical cord.

William Eddy, one of the police officers who responded to the complex at 8301 W. Charleston Blvd., testified that a resident approached him and pointed out a vehicle.

The resident, who also testified Monday, said he had seen a woman drive up in the vehicle that morning. He had noticed that the woman, who was pregnant the day before, no longer appeared pregnant. He also had noticed blood on the back of her calf.

Eddy said that after speaking with the resident, he saw a woman with a boy getting into the vehicle and noticed the blood on the woman's leg.

"I simply asked her if she was pregnant," the officer said.

He said the woman, whom he identified in court as Tucker, told him she was three months

pregnant. When he pointed out the blood on her leg, he said, she told him she was on her period.

Lisa Teele, an abuse and neglect specialist with the Metropolitan Police Department, later responded to the scene and questioned Tucker about the abandoned baby.

"At this point in time, Ms. Tucker was very emotional," Teele testified.

Teele said Tucker admitted giving birth to the baby on her toilet and then placing it in a shoe box. Tucker also admitted placing the box in a trash bin and then driving to a nearby drug store to purchase sanitary napkins, the witness said.

The abuse and neglect specialist said Tucker acknowledged she had heard about a new safe-haven law, which allows individuals to drop off a baby at a fire station, police station or hospital without facing prosecution. The law took effect May 31.

Teele said Tucker told her that when she realized what she had done with the baby, she returned to retrieve it. By that time, police and paramedics already had arrived.

The witness said she interviewed Tucker the following day at University Medical Center and obtained more detail. She said Tucker told her she began feeling pains the previous day at about 5 a.m. and started experiencing a lot of cramping around 7 a.m.

That's when she went to the bathroom and began giving birth, the witness said Tucker told her.

According to Teele's testimony, Tucker said her husband did not know about the pregnancy. She had not told him, out of "fear that he would leave her," Teele said.

On cross-examination, Teele said Tucker informed her that she had taken two pregnancy tests and that each had displayed a negative result.

Teele also said the Tuckers had faced no previous allegations of abuse or neglect regarding their three other children. Clark County records indicate that the couple were married on July 29, 1995.

Tucker's husband, Kenlon, a taxicab driver, sat in court during Monday's hearing but declined to answer questions afterward.

Thompson said he believes his client panicked after giving birth unexpectedly and had no intention of killing her baby.

Tucker's arraignment is scheduled for Sept. 4 before District Judge Jeffrey Sobel.

Thompson said he does not know if his client, who is being held at the Clark County Detention Center, will be able to post bail.

"She would like to see the baby," he said. "She understands the situation she's in and what people might think."

Gloria Fenster, a spokeswoman for Family and Youth Services, said the baby remains at Child Haven, the county's home for abused, neglected and abandoned children.

Thompson said out-of-state relatives are caring for the couple's three other children.