

David Sowers entered a plea to one count of aggravated murder and one count of kidnapping. He received a sentence life imprisonment with the possibility of parole after 36 years. He will serve life in prison unless he is granted parole and the earliest date that he could apply for parole is in 2056 at the age of 71. The fact that he can apply for parole does not mean he will receive parole.

The decision to resolve this case in this manner was difficult. Our office had several meetings with family members of the victim to discuss the various options regarding what charges the defendant could face including the death penalty. While our office certainly felt that charging the defendant with the death penalty would be appropriate we also believed that the victim's family should be consulted before making that decision. During the meetings with the family all of the potential charging options were discussed as well as the benefits and detriments of each decision.

With regard to the death penalty it was explained that assembling a jury who will unanimously impose the death penalty is increasingly rare as evidenced by the recent case of LaFonse Dixon. Dixon was convicted by a jury of beating, strangling and burning a woman to death in 2013. The jury voted 11-1 in favor of death but that one hold out was all that was needed for Dixon to avoid being put to death. Since 1981, when Ohio re-instituted the death penalty, there have been less than 350 convicted murderers sentenced to death. In the rare occasion where a death sentence is handed down, of those approximately 350 death sentences, fewer than 60 murderers have received the justice that both a jury and a judge determined was appropriate, leaving families and friends who have gone through the mentally, physically and emotionally draining process of a death penalty trial and sentencing still waiting for the justice they sought and deserved. Then there is the delay in putting the murderer to death. The current average time for an inmate to sit on death row in Ohio is 17 years with the longest time period currently being an inmate that has been on death row in Ohio for more than 35 years. During the time that the inmate is on death row there are endless attempts by the defendant's attorneys to prevent the execution. All throughout this process the victim's family is forced to endure an emotional rollercoaster while attempting to obtain some type of closure. Finally, there have been discussions by Ohio legislators pushing to abolish the death penalty claiming it is cruel and unusual; however, little thought is given to the cruel and unusual harm that the murder victim, friends and families suffer at the hands of a murderer.

In discussing the non-death penalty options with the family it was explained that the possible sentences for murder were life with a possibility of parole after 15 years, 20 years, 25 years, 30 years and life without parole. During very difficult and emotional meetings the victim's family expressed that they would be willing to forego a sentence of life without parole in exchange for a full statement from the defendant detailing what happened to the victim.

After meeting with the family our office spoke with defense counsel and a meeting was arranged between detectives of the Zanesville Police Department and the defendant and his attorney. During this interview the defendant provided a complete statement about the murder and accepted full responsibility for his actions. The facts provided by the defendant were verified by much of the evidence obtained during the investigation by Zanesville Police and Ohio BCI. As a result of this interview the victims family was provided with information they never would have had if this case had proceeded to trial.

Our office would like to express our deepest sympathies to the victim's family, friends and loved ones. We would also like to commend law enforcement for a thorough and well-coordinated investigation. By working together with the family and law enforcement we have been able to successfully capture, charge, convict and sentence a murderer in just 17 days. This type of swift and substantial justice is what our office strives for and our community deserves.