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Hossencofft, Henning protest unfair treatment

By Leslie Hoffman
Tribune reporter

Prosecutors have made no secret of their wish to keep a close eye on murder suspects Diazlen Hossencofft and Linda Henning after authorities say they intercepted jailhouse letters between the two that threaten witnesses and others involved in the case.

But defense attorneys argued in court that strict restrictions are being placed on the two based solely on unproven claims.

"It may be subjective; it may be surreal," said Hossencofft's attorney, Ron Koch.

Koch and Henning's attorney, Public Defender Trienah Meyers-Gorman, said their clients aren't getting any mail -- even from family members -- because it is being screened and withheld by the jail. Koch said Hossencofft hasn't been able to use the City-County Jail's law library.

Both defendants were visibly frustrated by the restrictions.

Hossencofft -- who had been clean-shaven with close-cropped hair in previous court appearances, but now had slicked-back long hair and a goatee and mustache -- enthusiastically nodded during the defense's arguments and frequently leaned over to talk with his attorney.

At the end of the hearing, Henning exploded in a fit of anger and yelled, "War! War! If that's what you want, that's what you shall have."

State District Court Judge Richard Knowles heard more than a dozen motions during the 2 1/2-hour hearing, most of the requests from the defense. A bulk of the motions were procedural issues about discovery, which is the information-exchange process between attorneys before trial.

But a main theme of Thursday's arguments centered around Hossencofft's and Henning's treatment in jail while the two await a joint trial on charges that they kidnapped and killed Hossencofft's estranged wife, Girly.

Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty in the case even though investigators have yet to find the body of 36-year-old Girly Hossencofft. The bank employee disappeared last September.

Assistant District Attorney Paul Spiers said that jail officials were only holding back pieces of mail that may contain possible threats. Mail not related to the case or from the defendants' attorneys should be getting to Hossencofft and Henning, he said.

"We aren't getting anything," Meyers-Gorman said. "Something would be better than nothing."

Knowles ordered that any mail currently being held by jail officials or prosecutors must be reviewed within the next 10 days and turned over to Hossencofft or Henning if it doesn't relate to the case or violate court orders.

He also ordered Hossencofft be allowed to use the jail's law library over objections from Spiers, who expressed concerns that Hossencofft could use it to pass messages to Henning.

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