



BCPO News

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Jury Convicts Lumberton Man of 2016 Homicide

MOUNT HOLLY, N.J. – Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced that a Lumberton man was convicted today of killing an acquaintance in late 2016 and burying his body in the back yard of the home he shared with his father and brother.

The jury found Christopher Costello, 29, guilty of Aggravated Manslaughter (First Degree) in the death of Justin Dubois, 23, who was originally from West Windsor, Mercer County. This is the second trial for Costello, who was convicted in March of Desecration of Human Remains (Second Degree) and Hindering Apprehension (Third Degree). The jury found Costello not guilty of Murder following the first trial, and could not reach a verdict on the charge of Aggravated Manslaughter.

Costello's brother, Bryan, 26, was sentenced to 15 years in New Jersey state prison in April after indicating that he killed Dubois and pleading guilty to one count of Aggravated Manslaughter (First Degree). Bryan Costello admitted in Superior Court that he beat Dubois with a baseball bat, and buried the body in the backyard of the family's Spencer Court home with the help of his brother, Christopher. Christopher Costello faces a term potentially more than twice as long as the one his brother received. The date for his sentencing has not yet been scheduled.

The investigation into the killing began as a missing persons case when a relative of the victim who lives at a separate residence contacted police on October 31, 2016, and indicated she had not seen nor heard from Justin Dubois for a few days, which was uncharacteristic.

Investigators who were executing a search warrant at the Costellos' residence observed an area in the back yard where the soil appeared to have been recently tilled. Excavation of the area uncovered the body of Justin Dubois, who had been occasionally residing with the Costellos at the time of his death.

The trial of Christopher Costello was led by Assistant Prosecutor Louis Casadia, with assistance from Bob VanGilst, supervisor of the Violent Crime Section of the Major Crimes Unit.

"This was a challenging trial, with Bryan Costello trying to take sole responsibility for killing Justin DuBois, but AP Casadia did an excellent job focusing the jury on the physical evidence, the nature of Justin's injuries, and the discrepancies in the brothers' accounts," Prosecutor Coffina said. "We appreciate the attention of the jury members throughout the trial and their careful consideration of the evidence in concluding that Christopher was an equal participant in this brutal homicide."

The case was investigated by the BCPO Major Crimes Unit – Violent Crimes Section, Crime Scene Unit and High-Tech Crimes Unit, the Lumberton Police Department and the West Windsor Police Department. The lead investigators were BCPO Detective Nick Villano, BCPO Detective Tom LaRosa and West Windsor Police Department detectives William Jones and Carey Zacheis.

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