

Flowers faces first-degree murder charges in deaths of Chua, unborn daughter
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Shannon Grant Flowers of Huron faces first-degree murder charges in the deaths of 20-year-old Brittney Chua of Woonsocket and her unborn baby girl.

An alternative felony count charges Flowers, 42, with fetal homicide in that he allegedly knew or reasonably should have known that Chua was pregnant.

The defendant is scheduled to make his initial court appearance this morning in a Huron courtroom.

In a Monday afternoon news conference, Beadle County State's Attorney Mike Moore disclosed some of the state's case against Flowers in the Thursday deaths of Chua, 20, and the unborn child. Chua was 16 to 20 weeks pregnant.

The cause of death was blunt force trauma to the head. Her body was hidden in the city's compost site east of town.

In an affidavit prepared by an agent of the state Division of Criminal Investigation, Chua was reported missing by her family on Friday. She had last been seen on Thursday.

At about 1:27 a.m. Saturday, "a citizen reported that Shannon Flowers told him that he had killed Brittney Chua and had thrown her body at the city of Huron's grass clipping and leaf dumping site across from the old Dakota Pork processing plant and covered her with branches and debris," according to the affidavit.

The affidavit states that the same citizen said Flowers had asked and paid him to burn some of Chua's belongings and a pipe used to kill her. The items were burned and the citizen disclosed that the location was on a farm southwest of Huron.

Also, the citizen said that Chua had told Flowers that she was pregnant.

Moore said the burn pile and the body were located on Saturday. The autopsy revealed that the victim had received numerous blows to the head.

The affidavit also states that Flowers talked to a Huron police detective via phone and had told the detective he had killed Chua. Flowers also told the detective the crime was premeditated.

Moore also released the circumstances surrounding the arrest during the news conference.

Authorities had Flowers under surveillance when he went to work Saturday morning at Earl's Alignment, Moore said. Calls were made to the defendant by the citizen and Flowers knew law enforcement officers were involved in the investigation.

When Huron Police Detective Jamie Gogolin contacted Flowers by phone, the defendant said he wasn't going to exit the building but was going to kill himself by hanging himself, Moore said at the news conference. Gogolin talked him into surrendering to officers during a 30- to 45-minute conversation.

Moore said the motive in the case remains under investigation. He said Flowers was having a sexual relationship with Chua, but until further tests are done it's unknown if Flowers was the father of the unborn child.

The unnamed citizen who reported that Flowers had told him he had killed Chua is a friend of the defendant and no charges have been filed against him, Moore said. He said the individual has been cooperating with authorities.

He also said Chua has two other children who are staying with their father.

Law enforcement authorities executed search warrants at Earl's Alignment, at the Flowers residence, for Chua's vehicle and for an Earl's Alignment customer's van.

Moore said the location of the homicides is unknown pending results of forensics tests. But he said authorities don't currently believe the location was a private residence.

It was the second homicide case in Huron within five days. Having two within that time span is "extraordinary," Moore said, because the city doesn't average one murder a year.

He said it has been a difficult several days for the families of the victim and the defendant. But it has also been a difficult time for law enforcement on the city, county and state levels, he said.

Moore said law enforcement officers have "done an outstanding job. They have a difficult job and they're doing an excellent job," he said.