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# Camas woman faces murder allegation in death of husband

## Defense attorney argues it was 'lawful self defense'

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Stephanie "Sam" Westby makes a first appearance Tuesday morning in Clark County Superior Court on suspicion of first-degree domestic violence murder in the slaying of her husband, 51-year-old Joseph Westby. (Amanda Cowan/The Columbian) [Photo Gallery](#)

A woman accused of fatally shooting her husband Sunday night at their Camas residence told investigators ["he attacked me and said he was going to kill me,"](#) court records show.

However, the couple's teenage children said their parents were having marital issues and that their mother had asked them to leave the house that evening,

Stephanie "Sam" Westby, 47, made a first appearance Tuesday morning in Clark County Superior Court on suspicion of first-degree domestic violence murder in the slaying of her husband, 51-year-old Joseph Westby.

Defense attorney Steve Thayer, who appeared on behalf of Sam Westby, argued she was acting in "lawful self-defense" and that the probable cause affidavit does not establish she committed a crime. Judge John Fairgrieve told Thayer it's "more probable than not a crime was committed."



Senior Deputy Prosecutor Anna Klein asked Fairgrieve to set Westby's bail at \$750,000, "based on the nature (of the alleged crime) and apparent premeditation."

Thayer argued that Westby has no criminal history, and there's no indication she's a flight risk. He asked she be granted supervised release.

"This was obviously situational and domestic in nature," he said, adding there was "no malicious motive."

Fairgrieve said Westby poses a risk to the public and set her bail at \$500,000, with release conditions.

### **'Constant state of turmoil'**

Police, fire and medical crews were dispatched at 8:21 p.m. Sunday to 19408 S.E. 42nd Circle. Sam Westby told an emergency dispatcher: "My husband and I just had a big fight ... I thought he was going to kill me and I shot him," according to the affidavit of probable cause. "I think he's dead," she added.

Throughout the 911 call, Sam Westby was hysterical and crying, and was often inaudible, the affidavit says.

A Vancouver police officer responded and contacted Sam Westby in front of the home and placed her in handcuffs. Joseph Westby was found dead inside.

Investigators subsequently took photos of Sam Westby's possible injuries. When they tried to interview her, she said, "I don't want to say anything without representation," the affidavit says. Detectives did not ask her any further questions. Sam Westby, still distraught, said her chest hurt and requested medical aid, the court document reads.

There was no record of police calls to the address. According to the Westbys' children, there was no history of domestic violence in the home. Both the couple's 18-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter told investigators "any type of violence would be out of character for either Sam or Joe," the affidavit says.

But in May, the couple started having marital issues. Sam Westby was depressed, and the marriage had been "in a constant state of turmoil since," according to the court document.

The couple's son told investigators his mother asked him to leave the house before the shooting. He said he didn't find that odd because his parents kept their fighting discreet, and he "knew this meant they were going to argue," the affidavit reads.

But the couple's daughter said she asked her mother if she could go to her boyfriend's house earlier in the afternoon and "found it odd when Sam suggested she stay the night," according to court records.

When investigators searched the home, they found it to be neat and orderly. "There were no overt signs normally associated with a physical altercation. There was no broken or damaged furniture or personal belongings," the affidavit reads.

After Tuesday's hearing, Klein, the prosecutor, declined to comment on the defense's argument that Sam Westby carried out the shooting in self defense. Klein said a filing decision on charges has not yet been made; the prosecution has 72 hours to decide.

Thayer said after the hearing he anticipates that Sam Westby's family will post her bail. If released, she must reside with a friend in Brush Prairie and is not to have access to firearms. She will be arraigned Sept. 27.

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