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Camas woman claims self-defense in husband's death

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Defense attorney Jacy Thayer, left, sits with defendant Stephanie "Sam" Westby at the opening of Westby's murder trial Monday at the Clark County Courthouse. Westby is accused of killing her husband during a confrontation over him having an extramarital affair. (Amanda Cowan/The Columbian) [Photo Gallery](#)



Camas woman claims self-defense in husband's death



Prosecutor Toby Krauel, left, looks on as defense attorney Steven Thayer presents a timeline of events during opening statements for the murder trial of Stephanie Westby on Monday at the Clark County Courthouse. Thayer argued that Westby fatally shot her husband at their Camas home in September 2019 in self-defense. (Amanda Cowan/The Columbian)



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A Camas woman's murder trial opened Monday with her attorney claiming she acted in self-defense when she shot her husband, whom she had confronted over having an extramarital affair.

Stephanie "Sam" Westby, 51, is charged with second-degree domestic violence murder and first-degree domestic violence assault in the September 2019 shooting death of Joe Westby. Judge Nancy Retsinas is presiding over the trial in Clark County Superior Court, which is scheduled to go into next week.

Westby has waived her right to a jury, so the judge will decide her guilt or innocence.

Senior Deputy Prosecutor Toby Krauel said Westby was saddened by her husband's plans to move out of their family home and into his own apartment. As his move-out date approached, her sadness turned to anger, he said.

Krauel noted there was no history of domestic violence or restraining orders between the couple.

"This relationship was one that was a peaceful, harmonious relationship until the day she shot and killed him," Krauel said.

The prosecutor said there is no evidence Joe Westby was armed at any point, and noted Joe Westby had a life insurance policy of which his wife was a presumed beneficiary.

Defense attorney Steven Thayer pointed to injuries Sam Westby suffered during a struggle prior to the shooting; she suffered a split lip and some bruising, he said. While Joe Westby suffered two fatal gunshot wounds, along with a third grazing gunshot wound, Thayer noted his body was found with strands of his wife's hair in his fist.

Thayer said Joe Westby threatened to kill his wife after she threatened to ruin his career by exposing his affair.

Krauel played the 911 call for the judge. Sam Westby can be heard screaming about shooting her husband and believing he's dead. The 911 call-taker can be heard at multiple points during the call trying to calm Sam Westby down in order for her to answer the dispatcher's questions.

Sam Westby cried in the courtroom Monday while listening to the 911 call.

The couple's daughter, Jessie Westby, 19, testified that her parents had a good relationship throughout her life and that she never witnessed any violence between them prior to the shooting. She confirmed she previously testified that her mother expressed sadness over her father wanting to move out, but didn't express anger or threaten to harm him.

The judge also heard from several first responders who came to the home and watched police video of the scene showing Joe Westby collapsed at the bottom of the stairs.

Clark County Medical Examiner Martha Burt testified she ruled Joe Westby’s cause of death to be multiple gunshot wounds to the torso.

The trial is scheduled to resume Tuesday morning.

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