

At 7:26 a.m., on September 12, 2019, police received a 9-1-1 call from a concerned neighbor reporting a fire at 86 Wickapecko Drive. During the subsequent investigation, it was determined that two residents of the home were unaccounted for – J.T. and the defendant, who was J.T.'s on again/off again boyfriend. The remaining residents had been out of town at the time of the fire. Also missing from the residence was J.T.'s Jeep Cherokee.

Based upon information provided by individuals familiar with both the victim and defendant, police learned that for the time period leading up to the fire, J.T. was upset with the defendant because of his use of alcohol and drugs. J.T. had also previously tried to throw the defendant out of the house.

Police immediately began to attempt to locate defendant and the victim's vehicle. Then, in the early morning hours of September 13, 2019, police located defendant in Paterson, New Jersey, in the driver's seat of the victim's Jeep Cherokee. He was the sole occupant of the vehicle which was filled with various items, including: 2 shotguns, jewelry and bank cards. Those firearms belonged to the victim. The defendant did not have a permit to possess the firearms; defendant also is not legally allowed to possess firearms based upon prior convictions for assault and burglary. Among the jewelry found was a Rolex watch and J.T.'s earrings. Also discovered within the vehicle was lawn equipment which the victim utilized as part of her landscaping business. That consisted of leaf blowers, chainsaws and a weedwacker. There was also additional jewelry that belonged to L.T.

Defendant confessed to a male acquaintance his involvement in the disappearance/death of J.T. Defendant indicated that he overheard J.T. on the phone saying she wanted defendant out of the home. As a result, defendant was going to wait until J.T. fell asleep, then steal items from the house to sell. However, J.T. caught defendant stealing items and threatened to call police. At that point, defendant "dealt with" J.T. Defendant then wrapped J.T.'s body in a tarp, put the body in a vehicle and brought the body somewhere to hide it. After hiding J.T.'s body, defendant returned to the house, loaded the Jeep with items, and then lit the house on fire by using nail polish remover. Defendant subsequently proceeded up north where he sold some items and bought heroin.

The investigation team spoke to two individuals, N.L. and M.L. who had interactions with the defendant following the fire. They both indicated that the defendant was trying to give the stolen landscaping equipment to M.L. to settle a debt.

An investigation into the fire revealed that the fire originated on the first floor on the East/South side of the residence. To note, this location is the location of the master bedroom, which was J.T.'s bedroom. However, based on information gathered, defendant would have been using that bedroom, while J.T. was using a different room.

Finally, surveillance footage was recovered from various locations on September 12, 2019, depicting the Jeep Cherokee. Specifically, at 7:23 a.m. the Jeep can be seen approximately one mile away, on Roseld Avenue, proceeding away from 86 Wickapecko Drive. This is approximately 3 minutes prior to the call reporting the fire. Based upon a combination of surveillance video and cell phone records, defendant never returned to the burning home; instead, defendant took the

victim's vehicle and property north to Passaic County, where the vehicle remained until the defendant's arrest.