



Press Release

June 22, 2021

Carver County Attorney Comments on Conditional Release of Matthew Vanhecke to City of Victoria Residence

The Minnesota Department of Corrections conditionally released Matthew Vanhecke, classified by the Minnesota Department of Corrections as a level three sex offender, from prison today to serve the balance of his criminal sentence (parole) at his father's home in the City of Victoria, Carver County, Minnesota. Vanhecke was a substitute teacher in Chaska when he was convicted of having sexual contact with two girls, ages seven and eight, during the 2012-2013 school year.

The Carver County Attorney's Office charged Vanhecke with Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Second Degree and Possession of Child Pornography in Carver County District Court. Due to a conflict of interest, the Scott County Attorney's Office prosecuted the case. In 2017, Vanhecke was convicted and sentenced to a 36-month term in prison. Vanhecke served part of his prison sentence and the Department of Corrections determined that he was eligible for supervised release. Vanhecke will remain under intensive correctional supervision until June 22, 2031.

The Carver County Attorney's Office did not participate in the decision to release Vanhecke to his father's residence in Victoria. The Minnesota Department of Corrections determines the release conditions and housing placement. The Carver County Attorney's Office first received notice that Vanhecke was to be released to the Victoria residence on or about June 18, 2021, and shares the community's frustrations with the notice process.

Citizens of Victoria and the community have questioned how this process evolved. These citizens have also expressed their legitimate and detailed concerns with neighborhood safety issues and his housing placement. These citizens are reasonably seeking further information to explain how this process unfolded and why a civil commitment action has not been brought for a sexually dangerous person.

The Carver County Attorney's Office takes these sexual offender cases extremely seriously and recognizes the fear and uncertainty that its community members have when a sexual offender is released to its community. In this case, prior to his release the County Attorney's Office and Attorney General's Office exercised its due diligence in investigating this matter and determined that Vanhecke did not meet the required statutory criteria for commitment as a sexually dangerous person. On matters such as this, the Carver County Attorney's Office consults with the expertise of the Attorney General's Office, which has a specific division of expert attorneys who evaluate and handle these cases. Here, we motioned the court for additional records and consulted with an independent and highly regarded expert in the field to make a recommendation on civil commitment. In a letter publicly filed with the district court on June 9, 2021, the Assistant Attorney General stated, "After pre-petition psychological review, the Carver County Attorney has decided not to proceed with an SDP/SPP civil commitment petition regarding Mr. Vanhecke at this time. The prepetition examiner has indicated that additional records would not change her opinion."

In consultation with the Attorney General's Office, the Carver County Attorney's Office made its decision based on the prepetition examiner's opinion and that the facts, while egregious and alarming, do not meet the heavy and extraordinary burden of proving by clear and convincing evidence that Vanhecke meets the criteria to be committed indeterminately as a sexually dangerous person.

Importantly, under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, the Carver County Attorney's Office is prohibited under law from disclosing further information on this case that is classified as private or confidential data. The information provided above is taken from a public document that was filed in Court and therefore is not private or confidential data. The County Attorney cannot further discuss details of the case that are not classified as public.

Carver County Attorney Mark Metz recognizes and appreciates the significant public input on this serious matter. Our office will continue to monitor the situation and take further action should the facts warrant.
