

# OK to weigh plea offer

Driver in crash that killed 5 gets a night to decide

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A Bellport man about to go on trial on charges of killing five people while fleeing from police at more than 150 mph in a stolen car asked Tuesday if he could have the night to think about a plea offer made by Suffolk prosecutors that would put him in prison for 30 years.

"I think that's fair," state Supreme Court Justice Fernando Camacho told Jamel Turner, 24, who had just talked privately for about 10 minutes with his mother to discuss the offer. If Turner is convicted of second-degree murder and dozens of other charges after trial, he faces 50 years to life in prison.

Turner's request came after prosecutors revealed to him that the evidence in the case would include testimony from a friend of his passenger in the stolen Chevrolet Camaro SS. The friend, a woman, was on the phone with the passenger, Lonidell Skinner, 19, of Bellport, and listened to Turner revving the engine and taking off when he realized police were following him, Assistant District Attorney Brendan Ahern said. And then she heard Skinner plead for his life and heard the crash that killed him on Feb. 14, 2018, Ahern said.

"He is effectively begging for Mr. Turner to slow down, and let him out," Ahern said. Turner responded, according to Ahern, by telling Skinner to "shut the [expletive] up."



JAMES CARBONE



JAMES CARBONE

**The crash, above, on Middle Country Road near Woodlot Road on Feb. 14, 2018, killed five people. Jamel Turner, left, of Bellport, has been offered a plea deal in the killings.**

Turner pick up Skinner and drive away. In recorded calls from the Suffolk County jail, Ahern said, Turner lied about who was driving.

Ahern said prosecutors had not disclosed the existence of these witnesses before because Turner has a history of intimidating and threatening witnesses in other cases.

Ahern did not name either witness.

Police at the time said Turner fled after they responded to a report of a stolen vehicle.

Turner was heading east on Middle Country Road with packages of crack in the Camaro when he crashed into the Mazda near Woodlot Road, police said. The Camaro then struck an oil truck, police said, and the Mazda collided with an eastbound 1999 Infiniti.

Vito Milillo, driver of the oil delivery truck, suffered a broken neck and back, prosecutors have said.

At Camacho's request, Ahern told Turner that even if he beats the murder charges, which often are difficult to prove in vehicular homicide cases, he still faces 30 years in prison on all his other charges.

Turner discussed his options first with his attorney, Scott Gross of Garden City, and then with his mother, Kim Lockett.

When he was done, Gross told Camacho, "He's seriously considering the options that are on the table," but wanted the night to think about it.

Camacho told Turner that if he takes the plea deal and avoids the murder charge, he would not face spending the rest of his life in prison.

"This is your decision, and I know it's a difficult one," Camacho said.

If Turner rejects the plea deal, a pretrial hearing will begin Wednesday and jury selection will take place next week.

## CORRECTIONS

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## THIS DATE IN HISTORY

**1513** Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León sighted present-day Florida.  
**1933** Japan officially withdrew from the League of Nations.  
**1942** During World War II, Congress granted American servicemen free first-class mailing privileges.  
**1958** Nikita Khrushchev became Soviet premier in addition to First Secretary of the Communist Party.  
**1968** Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, the first man to orbit the Earth in 1961, died when his MiG-15 crashed during a training flight near Moscow; he was 34.  
**1975** Construction began on the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, which was completed two years later.  
**1980** In the North Sea, 123 workers died when a floating oil field platform, the Alexander Kielland, capsized during a storm.  
**2006** Al-Qaida conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui testified at his federal trial that he was supposed to hijack a fifth airplane on Sept. 11, 2001, and fly it into the White House.

## Suffolk panel votes to raise water rates 6.6%

The Suffolk County Water Authority board voted 5-0 Tuesday to increase water rates by 6.6 percent for most customers April 1 and create a two-tier rate system for customers who use more than twice the average amount of water in any quarter.

For the average homeowner who uses 160,000 gallons, the new rates will boost annual

water bills by \$27.12 — from \$409 a year to \$436.12. The proposed rate hike is higher than those of recent years, which ranged from 3.75 percent to 4.2 percent in the last three years.

The two-tier rate plan, meant to boost conservation, could affect as many as 70,000 customers — about 25 percent of SCWA's 385,000 customers — who use more than 78,540 gal-

lons in any quarter. The authority will charge a 20 percent premium for usage over the limit.

Authority officials said the conservation rate will bring in about \$3.6 million a year. They said they could not estimate the potential impact on individual users because they may reduce consumption.

In 2015, for instance, billionaire David Koch's four-acre es-

tate in Southampton was the authority's water top user at 20.7 million gallons.

The rate increases will help fund authority's proposed \$138 million 2019-2020 operating budget, which is up \$5 million or 3.7 percent from this year, and the \$80 million capital budget, which is down by \$4 million compared with this year.

— RICK BRAND