

# Strangulation finding expected

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By Lou Michel

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Findings from a long-awaited second autopsy on Amanda L. Wienckowski, the 20-year-old woman found frozen in an East Side trash can, will be released this afternoon and are expected to conclude that she was strangled.

The results will be made public at a news conference in the Getzville offices of Hogan Willig, the law firm that has taken up the Wienckowski family's claim that the Erie County Medical Examiner got it wrong when it ruled the former Kenmore resident died of an accidental drug overdose nearly three years ago.

Wienckowski's relatives have insisted she was murdered by Antoine Garner, the last known person to have seen her when she went to his Spring Street residence for a paid sexual encounter on Dec. 5, 2008. Garner has denied killing Wienckowski.

Her frozen remains were found on Jan. 9, 2009, across the street from his house in a trash can beside a church.

"The family and Hogan Willig, which have not yet seen the report, fully expect the autopsy to confirm strangulation, but the contents of the second autopsy report cannot be discussed until the Erie County Attorney's Office receives a copy," said attorney Attorney Steven M. Cohen, a civil rights lawyer at the firm and lead counsel on the case.

The County Attorney's Office is expected to receive a copy this morning.

Twenty-two months ago, Wienckowski's body was exhumed and shipped to California for the second autopsy, after relatives and friends raised approximately \$9,000 to hire West Coast pathologist Dr. Silvia O. Comparini.

Numerous legal fights in State Supreme Court in Buffalo over body tissue, organs, photographs and documents sought by Comparini from the initial autopsy and police investigation caused the lengthy delay in completing the second autopsy.

It has previously been reported that the Erie County Medical Examiner's Office determined Wienckowski died elsewhere before her remains were discarded. The first autopsy ruled her death accidental due to an overdose of opiates.

Wienckowski's mother, Leslie L. Brill, has said she found it odd that this past September Garner, 25, was indicted on charges of assault and attempting to choke a 43-year-old woman in a vacant house on Jewett Avenue.

Garner has denied harming Wienckowski or anyone else.

He is currently being held in the Erie County Holding Center on the assault charges in the Jewett Avenue case, in addition to two counts of aggravated harassment for allegedly making threatening statements to Brill.

City of Tonawanda Judge Joseph A. Cassata has scheduled further court proceedings on the harassment charges for 2 p.m. Jan. 17.

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