

Mental Health Evaluation Ordered for Man Arrested After Hurling Rocks in Roadway, Damaging Property and Causing Passersby to Take Cover

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ST. THOMAS — A judge has ordered a mental health evaluation for a homeless man arrested for throwing bottles and rocks into a roadway, damaging property, including a vehicle, and causing residents, including minors to take cover.

Tobias Vanbeverhoudt was arrested on Monday night and charged with five offenses — second-degree reckless endangerment, damaging a vehicle, acts of vagrancy, disturbance of the peace and public nuisance. These offenses are punishable by prison sentences ranging from 90 days to 1 year and fines between \$100 and \$5,000.

While on sector patrol in the area of Nisky Center on Monday night, an officer heard glass bottles breaking and observed a bottle being thrown into the roadway. The officer was also flagged down by several residents who stated that a man was throwing bottles into the roadway. The culprit was described as a known vagrant who frequents that area.

Law enforcement was told that the individual began to curse loudly after being instructed to leave the area of a nearby food establishment. Once he crossed the street, he started to pick up bottles on the side of the roadway and hurl them towards the establishment. He later began hurling rocks as well, causing several individuals including minors to run in search of shelter. A parked vehicle was damaged during the incident.

Following his arrest, Vanbeverhoudt was remanded to the Bureau of Corrections as he was unable to post bail set at \$2,500.

On Wednesday, he appeared before the court, and Assistant V.I. Attorney General Brenda Scales asked that bail remain as set. Scales also recommended that Vanbeverhoudt undergo an assessment to determine if he is a danger to society, noting that he appears to need some sort of treatment. According to Scales, police are familiar with the defendant.

Meanwhile, Mary Ann Matney of the public defender's office requested that Vanbeverhoudt be released on an unsecured bond as he is unable to post any money. Matney asserted that the defendant is not a flight risk as he is homeless and unemployed. She noted no objection to him undergoing a mental health evaluation.

Judge Paula Norkaitis set bail in the amount of \$500 before expressing concern about the defendant's mental state. She noted that he appeared to be in a confused state when she attempted to inform him of his rights at the start of Wednesday's hearing. Norkaitis further highlighted that the court has looked at two prior incidents involving Vanbeverhoudt and that both were dismissed, one due to successful completion of counseling. According to the judge, it does appear that he can successfully abide by court rules given the right conditions.

Norkaitis therefore ordered a mental health evaluation to determine the defendant's ability to be released and whether he will pose a danger to himself or others. She indicated her concern that more serious outcomes could have occurred during the incident in question. While at the Bureau of Corrections, Vanbeverhoudt must be seen by a treating physician and is required to take any prescribed medication. The Bureau must file a report on his condition within 30 days and he cannot be released until he is considered stabilized.

The court has additionally requested that Vanbeverhoudt provide some indication of where he will live upon his release. During the proceedings, a police officer explained that he appears to house himself in an abandoned home in the vicinity of Monday's occurrence. However, Norkaitis stressed that Vanbeverhoudt cannot live in that area and that he is ordered to remain at least 50 away from the establishment that he was initially ordered to leave, as well as the business across the street where he threw the bottles from.