

Judge hears pleas to deny bail to suspect in 1991 rape-killing

By Valerie Schremp Hahn
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

TROY, MO. • Gayle Hogland desperately wants the man accused of murdering her daughter to remain in jail without bail, but after a court hearing Tuesday, she still does not know if a judge agrees.

The suspect, Michael Dowell, 44, of Ferguson, was charged in December with the 1991 rape and murder of 18-year-old Stephanie Hogland. A bail hearing in Lincoln County Circuit Court began Tuesday.

Hogland and her youngest daughter, Amy Hogland, 28, drove to Lincoln County from their home in Springfield, Mo., on Monday for the hearing. Judge David Ash put off completing it until Feb. 23 because the snowy weather kept witnesses from speaking for Dowell.

Gayle Hogland and other witnesses for the state still testified. Hogland showed the judge a binder full of more than 200 letters she said represented more than 3,000 people who

want Dowell to stay in jail.

"For the past 16 years, we have been virtually under a death sentence, while Michael Dowell was just free to roam," Hogland told the judge in explaining all the family has missed since Stephanie's killing.

Lincoln County Detective Chris Bartlett testified how police arrested Dowell after a state crime lab found that Dowell's DNA matched semen found in Stephanie Hogland's underwear.

Bartlett also said at least two women reported to police that Dowell had raped them but said Dowell later threatened them and the women recanted their stories. Lincoln County Prosecuting Attorney John Richards said after the hearing that authorities know of a third woman who claims Dowell raped her but that she never went to police.

Bartlett outlined Dowell's criminal record, which includes a conviction for leaving the scene of an accident and assault and numerous arrests for

crimes such as assaulting a law enforcement officer, stalking and one of the alleged rapes.

He said Dowell at first denied ever knowing or seeing Stephanie Hogland but later acknowledged that "he had sex with her but didn't kill her," Bartlett testified.

Dowell's probation and parole officer, Tim Lancaster, testified how he had Dowell provide a DNA sample in October to comply with a new state law involving felons. He said Dowell had violated his probation by not reporting in for at least a year and had completed one drug treatment program but failed to complete others.

Richards said after the hearing that he feels confident Dowell will stay in jail without bail and told Gayle Hogland that two murder suspects recently have been held there without bail. Hogland said she felt better afterward, relieved that some of Dowell's background is in the court record. "It made an impression on the judge," she said.

vschremp@post-dispatch.com | 636-255-7211