

OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HARFORD COUNTY

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MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: December 20, 2022
RE: Multiple Homicide Convictions

(Bel Air, Maryland) - Albert J. Peisinger, Jr., State's Attorney for Harford County, has announced Judge Paul Ishak has sentenced Bobbie Sue Hodge to four consecutive life sentences plus twenty years. The Defendant received a life sentence for each felony murder, five years for the assault in the second degree on Brenda Ayres, five years for the assault in the second degree on Dustin Gerhart, and ten years for the assault in the second degree on Marquise St. John, who suffered a broken ankle and arm from jumping out of the third-floor window to escape the fire.

A Harford County jury found Bobbie Sue Hodge, 63, of Edgewood, Maryland, guilty of arson in the first degree, four counts of felony murder, and three counts of assault in the second degree stemming from an arson that occurred on May 9, 2019, at 1862 Simons Court in Edgewood, Maryland. Ms. Hodge was facing a maximum penalty of four life sentences plus 30 years.

On May 9, 2019, at 2:28 a.m., a third-floor occupant of the dwelling, Ernest Lee, called 911 to report a fire at 1862 Simons Court. Members of the Joppa-Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department were the first engine to respond to the fire. By 2:35 a.m., when the Joppa-Magnolia Volunteer Fire Department arrived, the third floor of the townhouse was completely engulfed in fire. Abingdon Volunteer Fire Department, Bel Air Volunteer Fire Department, Aberdeen Proving Ground Fire Department, and Baltimore County-Kingsville Volunteer Fire Department also responded to the fire. Ernest Lee, Dionne Hill, and Kimberly Shupe who were all on the third floor, perished in the fire. Another third-floor occupant was able to escape the fire by jumping out of his third-floor bedroom window. He sustained a broken ankle and arm. The Defendant and two other basement occupants were able to escape to safety. Mary Elizabeth Kennedy who was living on the second floor was rescued by fire personnel and transported to an area hospital for treatment of her burns. Ms. Kennedy later died from her injuries on January 22, 2020.

The Maryland State Fire Marshal, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosions, and the Harford County Sheriff's Office conducted a joint investigation of the fire. After interviewing numerous witnesses including the occupants of the house, neighbors, and the Defendant, review of the 911 calls, and consulting with experts at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosions, the Defendant was arrested for arson and murder.

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“This tragedy shocked our Harford County community,” said Mr. Peisinger. “It is my hope that this verdict and now sentence is a step towards healing for the surviving victims and the families of those who lost loved ones.” Mr. Peisinger thanked the Maryland State Fire Marshal, Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosions, and the Harford County Sheriff’s Office for their joint efforts in the investigation and arrest of Bobbie Sue Hodge. He also thanked Assistant State’s Attorneys Angela Diehl and Timothy Doory for their extraordinary advocacy that resulted in the verdict.