

Criminal neglect charges against Oliver dismissed

Zyskowski Apr 3, 2014

CHARLESTON (JG-TC) -- Criminal neglect charges against a former Graywood Enterprises group home employee have been dismissed.

Former Graywood employee Christopher P. Oliver, 30, was accused of playing a part in the August 2008 attack of Dustin Higgins at a Graywood group home in Charleston. Higgins died eight days after the attack.

In February 2013, a jury acquitted Oliver of a first-degree murder charge but did not reach a verdict on a neglect count. The prosecution then chose to retry Oliver on that charge, which accused him of not doing enough to get help for Higgins' injuries. Defense attorney Leonard Goodman said Oliver had left work when he was called back in to care for Higgins.

"He was charged with criminal neglect because he was accused of not calling 911 fast enough," Goodman said by phone Thursday afternoon. "This has been ongoing since 2008, and it's finally over for him," Goodman said. "He cared for these young men, and he did what he could. He feels terrible for what has happened, but he's ready to get on with his life."

The motion to dismiss was made during a status hearing for the case on Wednesday at the Coles County Courthouse. According to the court document, State's Attorney Brian Bower made a motion to dismiss cause for the charges. Oliver's \$13,500 bond was exonerated, which Goodman says is typical with this sort of instance. Circuit Judge James Glenn presided over the hearing.

Attorney Melissa Matuzak also served for the defense over the course of the case, Goodman said. Bower could not be reached for further comment Thursday.