

# Testimony begins today in retrial in 2012 shooting death

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Testimony is expected to begin today in the trial of the man accused of killing Robby Ray Kohn after attorneys took two days to pick a jury.

This is the second trial for 22-year-old Darius Johnson of Chicago after the first one in January ended in a hung jury.

Johnson is charged with first-degree

murder, accused of fatally shooting the 41-year-old Kohn on Dec. 6, 2012, in Davenport.

Following testimony at Johnson's trial in January, the jury deliberated two days but was unable to reach a verdict.

Johnson is represented by public defender



**Johnson**

Thomas Gaul. Kohn's body was found in a rural Davenport farm field, 36 hours after police said he was shot in the head.

Two others, Barry Hamilton, 21, originally of Chicago, and Jessica Loerzel, 21, of Davenport, have been convicted on lesser charges connected to the case.

Hamilton testified at the first trial that he bailed Kohn out of jail two days before the shooting

and Kohn owed Hamilton money on the day he was killed.

Hamilton insisted he didn't shoot Kohn even though he was the one who drove Kohn, Johnson and Loerzel to the field. He testified that he watched Johnson pull Kohn out of the car and shoot him in the head. A first-degree murder conviction carries a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole under Iowa law.

# Men in separate trials for same arson case

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Two Scott County men are in separate trials for the same arson case this week in Scott County District Court.

Ricardo Ramon Bernal, 18, of 1515 N. Marquette St., Davenport, and Drew Tyler White-



**Bernal**



**Whitehorn**

horn, 19, of 82 Parkview Drive, Eldridge, are accused of trying to burn the home of a person who owed them money for drugs.

Each man is charged with one count of first-degree arson. The Class B felony is punishable by up to 25 years in prison.

Assistant Scott County Attorney Kim Shepherd, who is prosecuting Whitehorn, said she expects to call one more witness this morning before resting her case.

Whitehorn's attorney, Rebecca Ruggero, said she expects closing arguments

Thursday before handing the case to jurors to deliberate.

Davenport Fire Marshal Mike Hayman, who testified at both trials, said during a break Tuesday that an adult and four children were in the home at 719 E. 14th St. at the time of the fire and escaped without injury.

The fire occurred Sept. 3. Bernal and Whitehorn dumped gasoline on the porch and front door and ignited the fuel with a lighter, police said.

When police later searched Bernal's home, officers seized more than 10 pounds of marijuana and two weapons, a 9mm rifle and a 12-gauge shotgun, police said.

In addition to first-degree arson, Bernal is charged with one count of drug possession with the intent to deliver, conspiracy to commit a felony and possession of drugs without a drug tax stamp.

# Columbus schools adopt 2015 budget

**Jim Rudisill**  
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COLUMBUS JCT., Iowa — A balanced fiscal 2015 budget for the Columbus Community School District was approved by the School Board during a special meeting Monday. According to a published summary, projected total spending and requirements of \$15.2 million would be matched by an equal amount of projected total revenue and other resources.

Superintendent Marlene Johnson said the tax

rate for the new budget would be \$16.92 per \$1,000 taxable valuation. That is a decrease of about 97 cents from this year's tax rate.

No comments on the spending plan were made by either the public or board members during a hearing prior to the board's vote.

In fiscal 2014 budget action, the board approved five additional projects to be funded under the school's SAVE, or Secure an Advanced Vision for Education, and PERL, or Public Education and

Recreation Levy, accounts.

The projects included purchasing a leaf blower, purchasing a power washer, adding rock to the swimming pool parking lot and painting the swimming pool's filter pit.

The board also approved several fiscal 2015 projects, using either SAVE or PPEL, or Physical Plant and Equipment Levy, funds.

Several personnel actions also were approved by the board, including the resignations of Natalie Dennler, football cheerleader sponsor,

and elementary teacher Julie Smith.

The board approved hiring Elsy Solis as an elementary special education para-educator.

In final action, representatives from ABM Janitorial Services, Cedar Rapids, presented a proposal for assuming the school's custodial services. Johnson said the school was considering the possibility of outsourcing the services and planned to talk to one more company.

A final decision is expected in either May or June.

# Louisa supervisors OK Hometown Pride program

**Jim Rudisill**  
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WAPELLO, Iowa — Development of a Hometown Pride Program in Louisa County took another step Tuesday, when the Board of Supervisors approved a partnership agreement with Keep Iowa Beautiful

and the Louisa Development Group.

According to development group officials, the agreement already has been approved by the city councils in Letts, Oakville and Columbus City.

The agreement eventually will need to be approved by all the incorporated communities in

the county.

Once the agreement is signed, Keep Iowa Beautiful will pump \$60,000 annually into the program over the next five years. A local match of \$20,000 will be required. The funds will be used to hire a community coach, who will work with local governments and other groups to plan

and implement community projects around the county.

Officials hope to have the community coach hired by June 1.

In other action, the board declined to reconsider an earlier decision to switch health insurance brokers, despite a pledge by the county's current broker to cut his fees.

# Barge hits railroad bridge in Sabula

Associated Press

SABULA, Iowa — Authorities say a Mississippi River barge has hit a railroad bridge in Sabula, but there are no reports of injuries.

The Jackson County Sheriff's Office says it received a report Tuesday afternoon about

the incident in Sabula. Authorities say the barge hit one of the bridge's pilings, which is part of the structure's foundation.

There are no reports of injuries, but authorities say a man fell off the barge during the incident. He was rescued. Additional information about the crash has not been released.

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**Hunt & Find Contest**  
April 6th thru April 20th

**ENTRY FORM**

- Each day, from April 6th thru April 20th, an egg will be hidden somewhere in the Quad-City Times! When you find the egg, enter the page number on the appropriate date line on the Easter basket. Once you have all 15 days filled in, submit this entry form by dropping it off or mailing it to:  
**Quad-City Times, Circulation Department, P.O. Box 3828, Davenport, IA 52808**
- MAKE IT EASY!** Go online to [facebook.com/qctimes](http://facebook.com/qctimes) and submit your answers! No stamps, no gas, and you don't even have to get dressed.
- Office hours:** Monday-Friday 8am – 5pm.
- DEADLINE:** All completed forms must be received no later than Thursday, April 24th at noon.
- Entries must be on original paper...no copies! Past editions can be purchased at the Quad-City Times. Winner will be pulled from completed entries with ALL 15 days filled in with correct page numbers. Winner will be notified Monday, April 28th by e-mail. Their name will be published in the Quad-City Times.

April 6th thru April 20th

**Hunt & Find Contest**

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