

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 26, 2021 Press Release from Austin County District Attorney's Office:

An Austin County jury gave a local man the maximum prison sentence for Deadly Conduct at trial on Monday, 7-19-21, before District Judge Jeff Steinhauser.

The jury sentenced John Jones, 28, of Sealy to 10 years in prison for the shooting death of Emerick Dworaczyk in Sealy in 2017.

Evidence showed that Jones aimed and fired a gun in Dworaczyk's direction. The bullet struck Dworaczyk, who died almost instantly as a result.

In statements to law enforcement, Jones at times claimed he fired a warning shot at the floor which accidentally struck Dworaczyk. At other times, he claimed he shot Dworaczyk in self-defense.

The jury deliberated about 30 minutes before rejecting those defenses and returning the guilty verdict on Friday. After hearing punishment evidence the following Monday, the jury took 30 minutes to give the longest sentence possible for the charge.

First Assistant District Attorney Brandy Robinson presented the State's case along with Assistant District Attorney Ben Nystrom, District Attorney Travis Koehn, and legal assistant Lisa Tobola.

Jury selection was held at Christian City Fellowship between Sealy and Bellville on Monday to provide for proper spacing and Covid related precautions.

This was the second trial held in Austin County under the current Texas Supreme Court Covid-19 guidelines. However, due to several significant internet outages throughout Austin County that continued to interrupt the proceedings, Judge Steinhauser found it necessary, with juror consent, to dispense with some of the distancing requirements during the course of the trial.

Brandy Robinson said that the verdict could finally provide some closure to the victim's family.

"Unfortunately, this case was reset many times before Covid-19, primarily because we are legally required to try cases with child victims and jailed defendants first. The case was one of our highest priority cases when Covid-19 struck," Robinson said.

"Then almost all trials were put on hold throughout the State. Many Texas counties still have not resumed jury trials. We're grateful that Austin County has," Robinson added.

District Attorney Travis Koehn stated, "During the past year, Austin County judges, clerks, and court personnel have worked tirelessly with my staff to abide by the Supreme Court's Covid-19 trial rules so that we can return to trying cases."

"We're especially thankful to Christian City Fellowship for allowing us to use their facility to get trials moving again in Austin County," Koehn said.

"Sealy Police Department responded almost immediately to this case. Due to their quick and efficient work, along with tremendous help from the Fort Bend County Crime Scene Unit and the Texas Rangers, Jones has finally been held accountable," Robinson added. "It was truly an amazing team effort between law enforcement agencies."