

Haine Announces Murder Conviction In Fatal Shooting

by Brian Brueggemann
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EDWARDSVILLE — Madison County State’s Attorney Tom Haine announced Friday that a 30-year-old Alton man has been convicted of first-degree murder in connection with a fatal shooting. At the conclusion of a bench trial, Circuit Judge Kyle Napp found Charlton K. Merchant guilty Thursday of first-degree murder for fatally shooting Terence J. Hicks on Oct. 11, 2020, during a dispute in Alton.



The judge also found Merchant guilty of unlawful possession of a weapon by a felon. “This was a senseless crime that took an innocent life and terrified the community,” said Haine. “At least with this conviction another violent criminal is taken off the streets so he can’t harm others. We also hope it gives some closure to the family of T.J. Hicks, who have faced such loss. They were present in the courtroom throughout the trial, and we continue to pray for their healing.”

Merchant claimed that he fired in self-defense at Hicks, who was 34 and a resident of Madison.

“Stellar work by the Alton Police Department allowed our prosecutors to cut through the lies and reveal the truth: the defendant had absolutely no reason to shoot T.J. Hicks, and refused to take any responsibility to the very end,” Haine said. “We have no tolerance for violent crime, least of all those crimes that occur in our wonderful downtowns like Alton. Crime destroys progress, but with safety, communities like Alton throughout Madison County can continue to thrive.”

Police were patrolling the downtown area when they heard gunshots. Officers arrived almost immediately and found Hicks suffering from a gunshot. Haine commended the work of Alton Police as well as Assistant State’s Attorney Mary Pat Carl and Assistant State’s Attorney Phillip Voss.

Merchant will be sentenced later. The conviction for first-degree murder with firearm enhancement makes him eligible for a sentence of up to life in prison.