

Haine Announces 58-Year Prison Sentence For Man Convicted Of First-Degree Murder

by Brian Brueggemann
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EDWARDSVILLE — A 30-year-old Alton man on Friday received a 58-year prison sentence in connection with a fatal shooting, according to Madison County State's Attorney Tom Haine. Charlton K. Merchant received a 55-year sentence for first-degree murder and another three-year sentence for being a felon in possession of a weapon.



He will be required to serve the sentences consecutively, or back-to-back. Following a trial in January, Merchant was convicted of fatally shooting Terence J. Hicks during a dispute in Alton. The shooting happened on Oct. 11, 2020.

At a sentencing hearing on Friday, Assistant State's Attorney Mary Pat Carl asked the judge to consider that Merchant had been bragging on social media about having a gun, posting photographs of the weapon.

She also noted that he had been to prison before, for a sexual assault in 2008.

Haine said: "This crime was senseless. It caused much sorrow and grief for the family of T.J. Hicks, and it alarmed our community. Hopefully, this sentence brings a measure of closure for the family, and gives citizens confidence that the justice system in Madison County is dedicated to keeping our neighborhoods and our downtown areas safe."

Police were patrolling the downtown area when they heard gunfire.

Officers arrived almost immediately and found Hicks suffering from a gunshot. Merchant will be required to serve 100 percent of the sentence for first-degree murder.

Circuit Judge Kyle Napp, in handing down the sentence, said she found it tragic that Merchant "grew up in the Department of Corrections and will probably die in the Department of Corrections." Haine commended the work of Carl, Assistant State's Attorney Phillip Voss and Alton Police Department. "The meticulous and thorough work of police and prosecutors proved that this perpetrator had no reason to shoot T.J. Hicks," Haine said.