

exceeding \$22,000, a class B felony, according to a news release from county Prosecuting Attorney Dan Shue. She was arrested Monday after Circuit Judge Stephen Tabor on Nov. 23 found probable cause existed for the arrest. Bond was set at \$3,500.

to provide documents to the city's expenses. They noticed "many discrepancies" in which the documents differed from the original documents a bank provided, according to the affidavit. This led to the auditors further investigating the matter, as

the bank statements," Roam wrote. "The auditors discovered that this was because the checks were altered in the city database after the checks were deposited in the bank."

See **MAYOR**, Page 2B



A Little Rock Police crime scene investigator collects evidence after a shooting Tuesday in the parking lot of the Goodwill Industries of Arkansas store on Markham Park Drive in Little Rock. (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/Thomas Metthe)

Activist charged in firebombing goes free after sentencing

DALE ELLIS

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

One of five Black Lives Matter protestors charged in the firebombing of police cars in Little Rock and North Little Rock in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020

was ordered freed Tuesday after being sentenced to time served.

Brittany Dawn Jeffrey, 33, was accused along with four other people of numerous federal violations in connection with the firebombing of police cars belonging to Little

Rock and North Little Rock police and the Arkansas State Police in late August of 2020.

She pleaded guilty earlier this year to one count of possession of an unregistered destructive device in exchange for the dismissal of all other counts against her.

Following sentencing, Chief U.S. District Judge D. Price Marshall Jr. ordered U.S. marshals to release Jeffrey, at which point a smattering of applause swept through the courtroom. Marshall, known for being a stickler for decorum in his courtroom, no-

ticed but did not admonish the packed courtroom for the display. As he adjourned the proceedings, the 50 to 60 people jammed into the gallery stood up and applauded.

Once the courtroom was cleared, those in attendance See **ACTIVIST**, Page 3B

UA official pushes for aid to universities in farm bill

ALEX THOMAS

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

WASHINGTON — A leader with the University of Arkansas System's Division of Agriculture is urging federal lawmakers to support higher investments toward land grant universities and agriculture research as part of the next farm bill.

Deacue Fields, the division's vice president for agriculture, was one of six panelists before the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee on Tuesday. The committee's hearing was part of its review of the 2018 farm bill and its title on agriculture research. Lawmakers are examining the current law as they weigh possible changes to next year's legislation.

Sen. John Boozman,

R-Ark., introduced Fields before the committee. Boozman, of Rogers, serves as the committee's top Republican member.

"Supporting agriculture research and infrastructure development is not a donation, but an investment in national and international food security," Fields told lawmakers.

The land grant university system was founded in 1862 to provide federal support for studying agriculture and mechanics. Arkansas has two land grant institutions: the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

Academic and other institutions perform around 70% of public agriculture research based on federal

See **BILL**, Page 2B

Breaking ground on new health center



Janet Dickinson, superintendent for the Arkansas School for the Deaf, addresses the students in the auditorium of the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Arkansas School for the Deaf during a groundbreaking ceremony for a new health services building on campus on Tuesday.

(Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/Stephen Swofford)

guilty Tuesday of two misdemeanor counts stemming from a May 7 hike in which a Springfield, Mo., man fell to his death in a rugged section of the Buffalo National River park.

After a bench trial in federal court in Harrison, Magistrate Judge Mark E. Ford determined that Jeffrey Johnson led the hike and had solicited money for his services.

Johnson didn't testify in the trial. Based on other testimony, he led a group of 31 hikers along Indian Creek Trail heading to a rock formation known as Eye of the Needle. Indian Creek Trail isn't an official park trail, according to court testimony.

In a telephone interview with investigators, the audio of which was played in court, Johnson said he advertised the hike on Facebook and too many people showed up wanting to go. Johnson said he normally limits the number to about 15, but Facebook didn't give him the option to limit the size as a website he previously used allowed him to do.

Johnson became emotional and wept during the telephone interview when he spoke of the hiker who died.

"I wish he had listened to me about how important it was [to stick together] and how dangerous it was," Johnson could be heard saying on the recording.

Brad Lee Thomas, 46, and at least one other hiker decided to turn back during the hike, unbeknownst to

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Activist

• Continued from Page 1B

held an impromptu celebration in the hallway for more than 20 minutes as family members, supporters and attorneys hugged one another and talked excitedly.

Following impassioned pleas from three people, including Jeffrey's sister, to show mercy, Jeffrey apologized for her actions and asked Marshall to consider her release.

She had been in pre-trial detention for 18 months after having her bond revoked for marijuana use.

"I will abide by any conditions set forth and never repeat this behavior again," Jeffrey said, tearfully. "I ask you for mercy. Allow me to enter back into society. Whatever compassion this court shows me I will pay back tenfold."

Omavi Shukur, an adjunct professor of law at Columbia Law School and fourth-generation Little Rock native who worked with the late civil rights attorney John Walker, spoke in support of Jeffrey, telling Marshall she had spent years working as a community organizer trying to build up marginalized communities in Little Rock. Shukur was once arrested with Walker in 2016 when the two men recorded a traffic stop on video. Neither man was charged in the incident.

"Little Rock needs Dawn," Shukur said. "We need her determination to make this city livable for all. We need the hope she gives the downtrodden amongst us. Any further incarceration will deepen the deprivation that is already too prevalent."

Shukur said he first met Jeffrey at Parkview High School but that first real contact with her came in 2015, when he returned to Little Rock after having moved away following graduation.

"I soon heard about this amazing woman who was giving people hope that they could come together and change their condition," he said. "I heard about this compassionate organizer who was ensuring that children had school supplies even through they weren't able to

of the Civil War, the race massacres of 1919, the devastation of the Great Depression that reached its zenith in 1932, and the political murders and anti-war unrest of 1968.

"2020 just jumped right in there," he said. "When we watched a man die right in front of our eyes for eight minutes, that was scary. At that moment there was a lot of fear."

Hamilton noted that the Black Lives Matter protests that engulfed the nation played out against the backdrop of a global pandemic, which he said created even more trauma for people, including Jeffrey.

"How much trauma was she taking on that wasn't being released?" he asked.

Jeffrey was charged in a criminal complaint on Dec. 14, 2020, with damaging public property by firebombing police cars the previous August. She was charged along with Emily Nowlin, Aline A. Espinosa-Villegas, and Renea Goddard. The following February, the four women's cases were merged with that of Mujera Benjamin Lung'aho, a community organizer and political activist who was charged with being with the women and using firebombs to damage police cars belonging to Little Rock, North Little Rock and the Arkansas State Police.

Goddard pleaded guilty Sept. 26 to conspiracy to maliciously damage and destroy a vehicle by means of destructive device. Espinosa pleaded guilty Sept. 23 to possession of an unregistered destructive device. Nowlin pleaded guilty on Sept. 26 to possession of an unregistered destructive device. All three women are awaiting sentencing, which is expected to happen sometime early next year.

Lung'aho is currently in pre-trial detention awaiting trial on numerous charges including possession of an unregistered destructive device, malicious damage and conspiracy.

In addition to the sentence of time served, Marshall ordered Jeffrey to serve 18 months on supervised release and to pay \$529.30 in restitution to the Little Rock Police Department as well as a \$100 special assessment to

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...though they weren't able to afford them. I heard about this remarkable leader who was bringing communities together to clean up their own neighborhoods in light of the neglect from the city... She was actually doing the work necessary to salvage our city."

Shukur said that he and Jeffrey "fought to exhaustion" to make Little Rock more inclusive of marginalized communities but said they eventually were overcome by "the intense scrutiny of law enforcement."

"It got to be too much," he said. "I fled the city and Dawn stayed to make a way out of what seemed to be no way, which is why we're here today."

Phillip Hamilton — who with Lance Clarke of the New York law firm Hamilton Clarke made up Jeffrey's legal team — argued that Jeffrey's conduct was an aberration brought on by the emotions stirred throughout the nation in the wake of Floyd's murder at the hands of Minneapolis police. He said Jeffrey was one of many people nationwide who reacted out of frustration.

Hamilton said a number of dates in the nation's memory stand out for the fraught circumstances they represented, such as 1861 and the beginning

a \$100 special assessment to the court.

Following the hearing, Clarke and Hamilton both expressed satisfaction and relief at the outcome.

"I think it was an amazing outcome," Clarke told the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. "Justice delayed is not justice at all, but I'll take what happened today as justice."

Clarke said both he and Hamilton were deeply affected by the case.

"Cumulatively, we've represented upwards of 10,000 people, but sometimes you get that one case," he said. "The emotional impact and just everything that was brought to the table for this — social justice, the penal system, over punishment — it meant a lot to us ... the outcome we got today."

"There was a point within some of the witness statements," Hamilton said, "where you heard a lot of, 'I see myself in Brittany' ... There's a part of her that we see ourselves in. We are lawyers, but you can be an activist in different respects. You can be in the grassroots, you can be in the courtroom and I think the way we look at Brittany is there a piece of her in what we do, so I think it was a great match from the beginning."

Daily record

Marriages

Matthew Conduff, 42, and Jennie Martin, 47, both of Sherwood.
Tobin Neilson, 52, and Melissa Peeks, 52, both of Cabot.
Avinash Parey, 33, of Fort Worth and Katherine Chaisson, 31, of Cabot.
Courtney Ferguson, 30, and Marrison Lamb, 30, both of North Little Rock.
Brittany Bosley, 29, and William Lewis, 31, both of Little Rock.
Keisha Neely, 45, and Andre Plummer, 50, both of North Little Rock.
Tonh Huot, 54, and Siv Tang, 28, both of Sherwood.
Charles Tillman, 29, and Elizabeth Tate, 29, both of Little Rock.

Divorces

FILED

22-4285. Tonisha Molden v. Kory Shack.
22-4284. Regina Benezue-Page v. Benne Page.
22-4286. Pamela Bates v. Curtis Bates.
22-4287. Bartholomew Kogel v. Tara Kogel.
22-4292. Steven Smith v. Brooklyn Smith.
22-4294. Aikira Cherry v. Roderick Cherry.
22-4296. Winshella Shorter v. Lemond Porter.
22-4300. Ravit Carmeli v. Zacchaeus Wright.

GRANTED

22-1717. Linda Walton v. Eddie Walton.
22-1837. Tasha Jackson v. Don Jackson.
22-2698. Kissie Jones v. Derrick White

Sr.

22-909. Haydee Montes v. Jose Medoza Rendon.
22-1121. Jerry Boles v. Keyia Simpkins.
22-1547. Romma Rhodes v. Kevin Rhodes.
22-2634. Adriana Fuentes v. Eric Simmons Jr.
22-2697. Marco Castellon v. Sandra Morales.
22-3629. Jhonathan Moreira v. Delmy Blanco.
22-3734. Shavonda Morris v. Gary Morris.
22-3803. Laura McCalla-Anderson v. Joseph Anderson.
22-3837. Laura Dickerson v. Javi Dickerson Sr.
22-3965. Lavioris Adams v. Kimberly Adams.
22-4118. Natoya Johnson v. Jeffrey Johnson.

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