

Woman pleads guilty to manslaughter charge

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concedes the evidence against her would likely result in a conviction.

State's Attorney Mary Galvin is recommending a sentence of no less than 20 years.

"I think we entered into what is an appropriate disposition," Galvin said, declining to elaborate on why the state agreed to drop the

murder charge. "The family is glad to have closure... and that they can start to deal with this. They love their son very much and there's no greater loss than to lose a child."

Willette's attorney, Tara Knight of New Haven, said "certain facts came to light" during the course of jury selection that resulted in the prosecution offering a fairer plea agreement. Knight

intends to argue for a lesser sentence, "based on many mitigating circumstances."

"She (Willette) is devastated," Knight said. "She feels very sorry for the Finch family. She couldn't express it because she was on trial. This has been a terrible tragedy for everyone involved. She's frightened and she's sad, and she hopes a just sentence will be imposed."

Woman pleads guilty to stabbing boyfriend

By Tucker McCormack
Register Staff

MILFORD — With a trial just days away, a West Haven woman charged with fatally stabbing her boyfriend in a domestic dispute pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter in Superior Court Tuesday.

Charissa Willette, 19, wept as she stood before Judge Jack L. Grogins and accepted a plea bargain in the killing of Kevin Finch, 24, of Milford.

She faces up to 20 years in prison. Willette, who is free on \$150,000 bail, is scheduled to be sentenced Jan. 7.

The plea agreement was a surprise reversal in a murder case that appeared headed for trial after a year of failed plea bargain negotiations.

The agreement, reached after

11 jurors had been chosen to serve on the 12-member jury, opened a floodgate of emotion in a crowded Milford courtroom.

Finch's family members and Willette's mother sat on opposite sides of the courtroom. Barry Finch, the victim's father, held his daughter, Lisa, in his arm as she cried softly.

A section of the courtroom gallery was filled with a group of criminal justice students from the University of New Haven, who watched the proceedings with interest. Some of the female students fought back tears.

The Finch family declined to comment after leaving the courthouse.

Willette's plea was made under the Alford doctrine, which means Willette does not admit guilt but

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