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News

Man held on \$10,000 bail for arson, prostitution

By Jill Harmacinski
Staff writer

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SALEM — A former Beverly man charged with setting fire to his grandmother's house and running a male prostitution ring was held on \$10,000 cash bail yesterday following his arraignment in Salem Superior Court.

Daniel Fournier, 21, of 202 Jefferson Ave., Salem, is facing a variety of charges, including burning a dwelling, cruelty to animals, running a prostitution ring, engaging a minor in prostitution and three counts of intimidating a witness. He was indicted last week after a three-month grand jury investigation, prosecutor Murat Erkan said yesterday.

Fournier's defense attorney, James Tewhey of Salem, asked Judge Richard Welch III yesterday to release his client on personal recognizance.

A father of three, with a fourth child on the way, Tewhey said Fournier willingly showed up at Salem District Court yesterday morning to answer to other outstanding charges. When he arrived, he was arrested by Salem police on a warrant, filed after last week's grand jury indictment.

Tewhey said Fournier knew he was the focus of a grand jury probe long before he was arrested yesterday.

"He had plenty of opportunities over the past few months to take off and leave," Tewhey said. "But he has every intention of putting his name to this."

But Erkan argued that Fournier does pose a flight risk, based on the felony charges he is facing and a criminal record that includes a probation violation and four past restraining orders. Erkan also said Fournier threatened a 17-year-old man who worked in his prostitution ring, telling him "he was going to blow his head off."

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After Welch set bail at \$10,000, Tewhey again tried to appeal to the judge but was politely rebuffed.

"I made my decision," the judge said.

Fournier stood handcuffed next to his attorney throughout the hearing, dressed in blue jeans, a baby blue polo shirt and an Adidas running jacket.

Fournier is charged with setting an early morning fire in October 2004 at his grandmother's home at 70 Shortell Ave. in Beverly. The three-alarm blaze killed four pet parakeets and gutted the home. A firefighter was also trapped inside a fire engine for 20 minutes after a live electrical wire fell across the top of the truck.

As investigators looked into the blaze, they learned that Fournier was also allegedly involved in an Internet-driven male prostitution ring. He allegedly set up dates for men to have sex with male prostitutes for a \$250 fee. He would then keep half of the money for himself.

The encounters allegedly took place in Danvers, Peabody, Salisbury and as far away as Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Fournier is expected back in court on May 16 for a pretrial conference.

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