



NEWS RELEASE

Attorney General Mike Hilgers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 3, 2024

Today, Platte County District Court Judge Rachel A. Daugherty sentenced 31-year-old Michael J. Keener to 85 years to life of incarceration for the January 2022 murder of 77-year-old Larry A. Houdek in Columbus, NE.

On the evening of January 16, 2022, Houdek was found deceased in his Columbus residence by the Columbus Police Department. An autopsy revealed that Houdek's death was the result of multiple stab wounds.

A Good Samaritan called the police with concerns about injuries he had observed on Keener. Keener then disclosed to a Columbus police officer that he had just killed a man. After being treated for his superficial injuries, Keener took officers to the residence where Houdek's body was located. At the time of his arrest, Keener was found possessing various items belonging to Houdek.

In February of this year, Keener pled guilty to Murder in the 2nd Degree and Use of a Deadly Weapon after prosecutors agreed to reduce the murder charge from 1st to 2nd degree and to dismiss a third charge for Possession of a Deadly Weapon by a Prohibited Person. Keener will serve 65 years to life for Murder in the 2nd Degree and an additional 20 to 25 years for Use of a Deadly Weapon served consecutively.

The Columbus Police Department, Platte County Sheriff's Department, Nebraska State Patrol Crime Laboratory, Platte County Attorney's Office, and Nebraska Attorney General's Office assisted in the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of this case.

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