

## Cheshire man accused of killing his wife wants to see his child

By Randall Beach

A legal clash erupted in court Wednesday when the attorney for Emanuel Dominguez-VillaGomez, accused of murder in the stabbing death of his wife, Monica Dominguez, in Cheshire, asked a judge to allow the defendant to have contact with his young daughter.

The attorney, Norman Pattis, who has been hired in place of the public defender who initially represented the defendant, told Superior Court Judge Patrick J. Clifford his client wants a no-contact order lifted so Dominguez-VillaGomez can see his biological daughter, who will have her second birthday in November. The defendant is being held in lieu of \$1 million bail.

Pattis' request drew a strong objection from Nickola Cunha, the attorney for the maternal grandmother of the child.

"He's given up the right to his child by taking the life of the

child's mother," Cunha said.

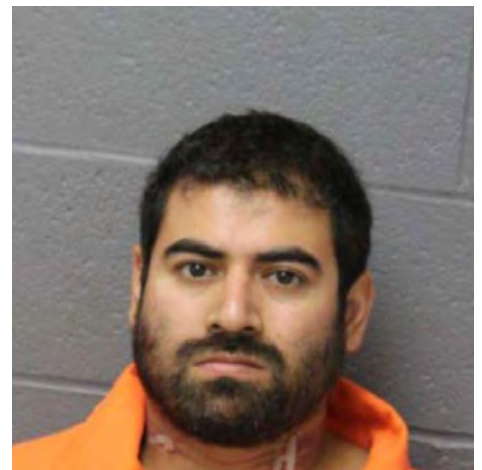
Clifford then reminded Cunha: "He's presumed innocent of the charge. He may well end up having a relationship with her."

"Not if I have anything to do with it!" Cunha replied.

Pattis then accused Cunha of speaking "gibberish" in the courtroom.

Clifford did not rule on the request for contact. But he appointed a guardian ad litem to investigate the situation and report back with recommendations based upon the best interests of the child. A guardian ad litem is a lawyer for a child.

Dominguez-VillaGomez, 31, allegedly stabbed his wife dozens of times during a domestic dispute in their home on Mountain Road on the night of Sept. 11. According to court records, Monica Dominguez had initiated divorce proceedings against him in July.



Emanuel Dominguez-VillaGomez

He is charged with murder, first-degree assault, reckless endangerment, risk of injury to a child and unlawful restraint.

The defendant, dressed in an orange prison jumpsuit, was quiet and stoic during the spirited discussion about the proposal he be allowed to see his daughter. He has not yet entered a plea to the charges but is expected to plead not guilty.

Senior Assistant State's Attorney John P. Doyle Jr. noted the couple also had an 11-year-old

boy, who, unlike the daughter, is not the defendant's biological child. Doyle said the boy is a potential witness in the case.

During the hearing, Clifford noted the protective order that had been imposed on the defendant "was to protect the deceased but it extended to the children."

At this point the state is still gathering evidence in the case, which it will share with Pattis. Doyle said he is waiting for the state medical examiner's final report and information from state police.

Clifford scheduled the next hearing for Oct. 30 and said on that date they will discuss the possibility of setting a future date for a probable cause hearing. In those hearings the prosecution outlines its evidence in an effort to prove there is enough to go forward with the murder charge. Pattis said he anticipates he will exercise the right to ask for that hearing.

Cunha told Clifford the maternal grandmother is seeking custody of the children. Pattis then asked Clifford to appoint a guardian ad litem. Pattis asserted Cunha "lacks objectivity."

Diana Montes of Meriden, who said she was one of Monica Dominguez's best friends, watched the courtroom proceedings, then spoke outside

court about the victim.

"She loved wine and going to vineyards," Montes said. "She liked to ride her bike around town, she liked to hike and she loved kick-boxing. She was very fit."

Montes, who said she raised nearly \$11,000 for her friend's funeral costs, said Dominguez-VillaGomez "should have no right" to see his young daughter.

"Everybody wants justice," Montes added.

Cunha said outside the courtroom, "This is a very sad ongoing saga with the state of Connecticut. The state could have helped, could have intervened. And unfortunately, they didn't. This family could have been spared this trauma." She declined to specify what state official or department she believes should have intervened. But she added, "We have a mental health crisis."

Asked to respond to Pattis' courtroom statement that she was speaking "gibberish," Cunha said: "He knows me well. He knows I would not say anything on the record unless I have solid evidence." ■