

October 19, 2021

Newburyport City Council  
City of Newburyport, Massachusetts  
By Email

DANGEROUSNESS: MGL c. 139, s. 1 Public Hearing re 107 State Street

Dear Newburyport City Council Members:

The neighborhood has a genuine and warranted fear of crime because of the abandoned gas station.

My husband and I live on High Street next to the property, and have for 30 years. While we cannot see the station from inside our house because of some visual barriers<sup>1</sup>, our backyard is exposed to the site.

State Street abutters are forced to see and experience, head on, late-night activity and crime-related physical evidence on the property. I hope they will testify to you about this.

Even in the waning years of the station's operation (after the then-lessee moved his main business) crime was a concern. Early one morning I was surprised by a vagrant sleeping behind the station, within feet of our property.

In 2017, the lone employee at the station was held up and robbed (Daily News article attached).

It was good to see, in the Newburyport Police Department log submitted to you, that officers check the site with some frequency. But they cannot be there all the time. The site is a crime magnet, and a violent crime takes only minutes.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Niketic, 93 High Street

Cc: Honorable Mayor Donna Holaday, City Clerk Richard Jones

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<sup>1</sup> Our visual barrier is Global's failing fence and dying trees. The maintenance of a visual barrier, "a wall of trees...to make the structure as inconspicuous as possible from the area of High Street," was a condition of the property's use as a gas station in ZBA Special Permits issued in 1966 and 1992. Neither of the owners, Mobil or Global, from 1992 to now, have seriously honored this.

# NO BAIL FOR ARMED ROBBERY SUSPECT

Police say Lenox man  
held up gas station

By DAVE ROGERS  
Staff Writer

NEWBURYPORT – A man driving from Maine to western Massachusetts held up a gas station at gunpoint Tuesday afternoon, later telling police he did it for money for gas and food.

Austin Gregory, 30, of Lenox was arrested Tuesday night in Salisbury Square shortly after allegedly brandishing what appeared to be a handgun and stealing \$113 from State Street Mobil about 4:30 p.m. Despite the handgun later being identified as a pellet gun, Gregory was charged with armed and masked robbery.

At his arraignment Wednesday morning, Gregory was ordered held without bail until at least May 25 when he is due back in Newburyport District Court for a dangerousness hearing.



DAVE ROGERS/Staff photo

**Robbery suspect  
Austin Gregory is  
arraigned Wednesday  
in Newburyport  
District Court.**

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# ROBBERY

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Gregory's attorney, Sharon Ray, said her client suffers from mental illness. She asked that Gregory be evaluated by the court's clinician to determine if he is competent to stand trial and responsible for the crime he is charged with committing.

Ray also tried to spare her client from appearing in the courtroom so he could avoid being photographed during his arraignment. Judge Allen Swan quickly denied her motion.

Numerous Newburyport police officers responded to an armed robbery at State Street Mobil about 4:30 p.m., according to a police report.

By the time police arrived, Gregory, driving a red Toyota Yaris, had fled. Shortly after the car's description and the license plate number were relayed to the station, Salisbury

police told Newburyport police they had stopped Gregory on Beach Road in Salisbury.

Newburyport police Officer Eric Marshall picked up Gregory in Salisbury and drove him back to the Mobil station, where the lone employee inside the business at the time of the robbery positively identified him.

During the ride back to Newburyport, Gregory told Marshall he had no intention of hurting anyone and said he was hungry and had no money for food or gas.

Salisbury police confiscated \$113 in cash and what appeared to be a black semiautomatic handgun. It was later determined to be a pellet gun, according to Marshall's report.

In his report, Newburyport police Inspector Michael Sugrue wrote that Gregory contemplated robbing the Storey Avenue Mobil station closer to the highway but decided there were too many people there.

"He told me he didn't want to go 'all Pulp Fiction,'" Sugrue wrote.

The 1994 film "Pulp Fiction" is known for its gratuitous violence and brutal deaths by gunfire.

Gregory also told Sugrue that he was homeless and driving back to Lenox from his father's house in Maine.

"He told us that he wasn't a drug addict, just down on his luck. He said he didn't want to hurt anyone, he just (expletive) up," Sugrue wrote in his report.

Gregory entered the gas station covering his face with a T-shirt and wearing a hat, according to court records. He never pointed the BB gun at the clerk but told him to give him all the money. After receiving what money there was, Gregory ordered the clerk to lay on the ground for five minutes or he would put a bullet in his head.

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