

Infant's mother appears in court

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Published: Tuesday, August 1, 2006

Staff photo by Danny Drake

Ashley Ray Eberson was represented by Attorney Steven Rosenfeld on Monday.



[Previous Play/Stop Next](#)

Number of Pictures: 1 of 1

MAYS LANDING — A woman accused of leaving her newborn boy in a trash can outside an Atlantic City home weeks ago had many family and friends in the courtroom to support her during her first court appearance Monday.

“Stay strong, Ashley. We love you,” a young woman shouted to Ashley Ray Eberson, who is charged with aggravated manslaughter, unlawful disposition of human remains and tampering with evidence.

The body of a full-term, 7 pound, 19 inch baby was discovered July 4.

It is alleged that some time before 2:30 p.m. on July 4 Eberson, 23, of Ventnor, delivered the baby at her boyfriend's home on the 100 block of South Texas Avenue in Atlantic City. Authorities said the infant was alive, and the umbilical cord was torn. The baby was put in a plastic bag and placed in a trashcan behind the house, authorities said shortly after the woman's arrest Friday.

Then someone called 911 to report Eberson was bleeding. An ambulance arrived at the home and took the woman to the hospital. Doctors discovered that she had just given birth and still had the placenta in her body. Atlantic County Prosecutor Jeffrey S. Blitz would not divulge the identity of the caller. He also would not say whether the baby was dead when he was put into the trashcan.

Police went to the home, searched for the baby and found the body around 5:30 p.m. The baby was pronounced dead at the scene.

It took authorities weeks to arrest the woman because Atlantic County Medical Examiner Dr. Hydow Park had to consult with a pediatric pathologist and a neuropathologist to determine the cause of the baby's death. It was asphyxia, Blitz said last week.

During the brief hearing Monday, Superior Court Judge James Isman advised Ebersson of her rights. The lean, tan woman with blond-streaked hair stood beside her attorney, Steven Rosenfeld. She turned briefly to look at her loved ones.

Rosenfeld said he would ask that Ebersson's bail of \$500,000 cash or bond be lowered at a hearing Thursday before Superior Court Judge Robert Neustadter. If indicted and if convicted, Ebersson could face as many as 30 years in prison.

Last week, Blitz would not say if anyone else would be charged in the crime. After the hearing Monday, First Assistant Prosecutor Murray Talasnik said, "At this point in the investigation there was enough evidence to charge Miss Ebersson. The matter is always open, as you know we would not comment further."

More than 20 people sat in the courtroom. One woman appeared teary-eyed. Ebersson's father, Charles Ebersson, wore dark sunglasses and clutched his wife, Rubye.

At the end of the hearing, family and friends of the young woman gathered outside the courtroom. Robert Wolfson, a relative of the Ebersson family, called the situation "a travesty."

"Why hurt the people already so hurt," Wolfson said of the family. "They shouldn't have to go through any more than they already have."

Susan Ferrier, of Safe Haven, an organization to protect unwanted babies from being hurt or killed, sat in the courtroom. After the hearing, she approached Ebersson's parents and spoke with them for a few minutes.

Ferrier told a reporter prior to the proceeding, that she just wanted expectant mothers to be aware that help is out there.

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