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Police 'close' to answer in South Boston slaying

Residents, authorities meet tonight

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JULY 29, 2013

 ARTICLE

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BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

Mourners gathered for a Mass and prayer meeting to remember Amy Lord at St. Vincent de Paul Church in South Boston on Saturday.

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Boston police are “real close” to determining who kidnapped and fatally stabbed 24-year-old South Boston resident Amy Lord, Boston Police Superintendent William Evans said Sunday, as officials prepared to hold a community meeting Monday evening to address citizens’ fears.

“It’s progressing very well . . . I’m confident we’re headed in the right direction,” Evans said in a phone interview.

Among the evidence being gathered is footage from surveillance cameras, he said, with additional clues sought from DNA evidence, fingerprints, and Lord’s car, which was discovered burning on a South Boston street hours before she was found dead in a wooded area Tuesday.

“I think we’re getting real close,” he said.

Still, he said, “anyone who might have seen something, we want them to come forward. Every little

tidbit helps.”

Evans said he and other top officials from the department, including Commissioner Edward F. Davis and the head of the citywide drug control unit, Lieutenant Detective Robert Merner, plan to discuss the latest details about the case and will try to alleviate residents’ fears at the community meeting.

“

‘We want to let the community know we’re doing everything we can to make South Boston safe.’

Officials from State Police, the Drug Enforcement

Administration, and the state’s Probation Department along with local elected leaders are also expected to attend the meeting, scheduled for 7 p.m. at the Tynan Elementary School.

Lord was abducted Tuesday morning as she left her South Boston apartment heading to a gym. She was forced by her captor or captors into her black Jeep, and they went to five nearby banks where she withdrew money, before she was stabbed to death.

Her Jeep was found burning about a mile from her apartment later that morning, and her body was found that afternoon about 8 miles away, at the Stony Brook Reservation in Hyde Park.

Authorities said they continue to investigate whether Lord’s killing was connected to two assaults in South Boston.

One occurred Tuesday morning, about two hours before Lord was kidnapped. The other happened several hours after Lord’s body was found.

Edwin Alemany, 28, of Boston, has been arrested in those assaults and faces charges including assault with intent to murder and kidnapping, and has been called a “person of interest” in Lord’s death.

A judge postponed his arraignment Thursday, ordering Alemany, who has a lengthy criminal record, to first undergo a 20-day hospital evaluation. His lawyer and a psychiatrist who spoke to him described Alemany as suicidal and incoherent.

Evans declined on Sunday to comment about Alemany’s possible connection to the fatal stabbing.

Officials at the Boston Housing Authority said they are investigating whether Alemany was illegally living with a resident of the Old Colony public housing development in South Boston, about a half-mile from Lord’s apartment.

The authority will seek court permission to evict the resident if that investigation concludes that Alemany had been living there, said authority spokeswoman Lydia Agro.

On Sunday afternoon, residents of the housing development pointed out a building in the complex where they said Alemany had been living.

A Boston police cruiser was parked in front of the building, and officers were seen entering and exiting it.

Paige, a 25-year-old longtime resident of the complex who declined to give her last name, said she had seen Alemany there, but had never directly interacted with him.

“He always used to be outside cleaning his gray [Chevrolet] Impala,” she said. “A friend of mine and I were talking last night and she knew him. She said he was a normal guy.”

Paige said news of Alemany’s arrest was shocking.

“He seemed just like a regular guy, but that just goes to show, you never know,” she said. “It’s baffling that your neighbor — just people in general — are capable of this.”

Evans said law enforcement officials at Monday’s meeting will try to address concerns residents have raised in the wake of the recent attacks on “three women who as far as we know were completely innocent.”

“We’ll be talking about people’s fear level and how we can bring that down,” said Evans, who lives in South Boston. “We want to let the community know we’re doing everything we can to make South Boston safe.”

He said officers have boosted their presence around the neighborhood since the assaults.

Last week, officers joined neighborhood crime watch members to hand out whistles and offered tips to residents on how to avoid becoming targets of crime.

And, Evans said, Boston police for about the past 15 months have stepped up crime reduction efforts in South Boston, honing in on drug-related activity, which has drawn the majority of complaints from residents there.

The crackdown began last April, after Barbara Coyne, 67, was stabbed to death in her South Boston home, allegedly by Timothy Kostka, 26, also of South Boston. Prosecutors have said he was there to steal high-end fishing equipment to sell for money to buy drugs.

Since that homicide, Boston police have made 428 drug-related arrests in South Boston, Evans said.

“Right after [Coyne’s murder] we really picked it up,” said Evans. “We’ve been relentless. I know the community is concerned about the drugs. That’s the big issue in South Boston.”

Reports of serious crimes are down about 11 percent in South Boston this year, compared with the same

span last year, Boston police statistics show. Homicides, rapes, robberies, aggravated assaults, and larcenies, including attempts at those crimes, are all down, while burglaries and vehicle thefts are up slightly.

Evans said he did not know whether authorities believe Alemany has ties to drugs.

“We just know we’re dealing with a very violent individual . . . who should be incarcerated,” he said.

Boston police have said a detective failed to follow up on a 2012 assault case in which a woman was choked into unconsciousness, and then woke to find she was holding the wallet of Alemany, her suspected assailant.

Authorities on Sunday did not provide new information about an ongoing review of that case or about the detective who had failed to follow up. The detective and his lawyer could not be reached for comment.

“It is troubling for all of us,” Evans said Sunday, referring to the handling of the 2012 case. “We’ll do an internal affairs investigation and make sure something like that never happens again.”

Police are also continuing a broader review to ensure follow-up steps have been taken in other outstanding cases, but declined Sunday to comment on the status of that review.

Lord, a Wilbraham native, was the oldest of three sisters.

She earned a bachelor’s degree from Bentley University, and for the past two years worked at a digital marketing and Web design firm in the South End.

On Wednesday, hundreds of people gathered in a park in her hometown, about 80 miles west of Boston. On Friday, about a dozen people held a vigil outside her South Boston apartment on Dorchester Street, where candles, flowers, stuffed animals, and other items have been placed in her memory. And, over the weekend, Lord was remembered at church services.

She will be mourned again by family and friends at a wake on Monday from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Sampson Family Chapels’ Chapel of the Acres funeral home in Springfield.

A funeral is scheduled for 10 a.m. Tuesday at St. Cecilia’s Church in Wilbraham, followed by a private burial at St. Aloysius Cemetery in the Indian Orchard neighborhood of Springfield.

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BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Lord and her vehicle were captured on surveillance video.

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