

# 17-year-old charged with attempted murder

By Al Edenloff

Editor

A 17-year-old boy's rocky relationship with his stepfather combined with frustration over household chore assignments led to a shooting Monday night, say Douglas County authorities.

On Wednesday, Andrew Paul Bennewitz of Alexandria was charged with attempted first-degree murder of his stepfather, James Elenker.

The Douglas County Attorney's Office also filed a motion to try Bennewitz as an adult.

Here's what authorities say happened on the night of the shooting, according to the criminal complaint:

A 911 caller identifying himself as Andrew Bennewitz told a Douglas County dispatcher that his stepdad was dead and that



A. Bennewitz  
CHARGED

he had shot him at his family's residence.

Deputies were sent to the scene at 2066 County Road 86 in Hudson Township and while

they were en route, the dispatcher stayed on the phone with Bennewitz.

During that time, Bennewitz told the dispatcher that the last five years with his stepfather had been "very difficult," according to the complaint, and that two weeks earlier, Bennewitz had decided to kill him.

The dispatcher asked Bennewitz to put down the gun and stay on the phone until deputies got there.

CHARGED goes to A8

"Triggering event" was chores

## CHARGE from A1

# 'Triggering event' was cores

When emergency personnel arrived, they found Bennewitz standing in the yard outside of the garage, holding a cell phone. A nine-millimeter handgun was on a picnic table in the yard a short distance away.

In the attached garage, deputies found Blenker lying on the floor. He was conscious but had suffered a gunshot wound through his body.

The bullet had entered on Blenker's right side, went through his body and exited on the other side, according to the complaint.

Blenker was stabilized and later airlifted to Hennepin County Medical Center where he remains in serious condition.

When Sergeant Dave Ahlquist later interviewed Bennewitz at the law enforcement center, the 17-year-old did not deny or minimize his conduct, according to the complaint.

Bennewitz said that although there had been no physical abuse, sexual abuse or violence in the home, his relationship with his stepfather had not been good.

Bennewitz told Ahlquist that the triggering event that caused him to plan to kill his stepfather happened 15 days earlier, according to the complaint. At that time, Blenker was assigning household chores and Bennewitz was frustrated with the detailed manner in which the chores were assigned.

Bennewitz said he was frustrated with his stepfather's parenting and didn't

### DID YOU KNOW?

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which was parked outside of the garage.

After Blenker went outside to look, Bennewitz followed him, took the handgun out of his pocket and from a distance of eight to 10 feet, shot twice, according to the complaint.

To convict someone of attempted first-degree murder, the prosecution must prove premeditation or that the suspect formulated a plan before committing the act.

Bennewitz made his first appearance in court on Wednesday. He was ordered to be held without bail in juvenile detention before his next court hearing.

Before the actual criminal charge is addressed, the court must determine whether Bennewitz should be tried as an adult.

Under state law, a juvenile defendant 16 or older who commits a felony level offense with a firearm is typically certified to the adult court, according to Douglas County Attorney Chris Karpan. A final decision, however, rests with a juvenile court judge.

Before deciding, the court will order a certification study. A probation officer