

☆ **Anti-casino**

Please turn to Page 6

Bortner changes her mind

Decides against plea,
will go to trial in Nov.

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DOVER — The mother of a murdered 21-month-old girl, who was expected to plead guilty today to child endangerment charges, changed her mind at the last minute and will go to trial in November.

Amanda Bortner appeared in Strafford County Superior Court late this morning for a plea hearing on two counts of endangering the welfare of a child for failing to protect her daughter from the abuse that led to her death.

Kassidy Caitlyn Bortner died on Nov. 9, 2000, from blunt-force trauma to the head and abdomen.

Bortner's boyfriend, Chad E. Evans, 30, formerly of Milton Road in Rochester, was convicted in December of second-degree murder and multiple counts of assault in connection with Kassidy's death. He was sentenced in April to serve a minimum of 28 years in prison.

Bortner, dressed in a black shirt,



AMANDA
BORTNER

Bortner

Continued from Page 1

tweed pants and black-heeled shoes, arrived at court this morning with members of Evans' family for what had been scheduled as a plea and sentencing hearing.

Her court-appointed attorney, Patricia Wiberg, told Judge Tina L. Nadeau that after

reviewing the terms of the plea, Bortner decided to exercise her constitutional right to a trial.

Nadeau noted that Bortner had intended to enter a "naked plea," which means that the state had not entered into any agreement with her.

The maximum jail term she faces if convicted on the two misdemeanor counts of endangering the welfare of a child is two years.

Bortner did not speak during the 20-minute hearing.

Assistant Attorney General David Ruoff estimated Bortner's child endangerment trial will last about 10 days starting Nov. 4.

Bortner, 20, testified during Evans' trial that she loved him and missed him. During the three weeks between opening arguments and the verdict, Bortner often arrived at court with Evans' friends and family members.

She was not present, however, when the guilty verdict was delivered.

Bortner spoke at Evans' sentencing hearing in April, questioning why her mother and other family members were so concerned about Kassidy after her death when she was "just another kid" during her short life.

The charges against Bortner allege she violated a duty of care to her daughter by failing to protect the girl from Evans'

abuse in the weeks leading up to her death and in the hours before her death. One of the charges specifically refers to Bortner's behavior on the day Kassidy died.

Court documents indicate Bortner drove Kassidy from Evans' house in Rochester to the apartment of her sister, Jennifer Bortner-Conley, in Kittery, Maine.

Kassidy had already received the blows that would cause her death and was exhibiting signs of distress when Bortner got her ready for the drive to Kittery, according to testimony at the trial.

During Evans' trial, both Bortner and her sister testified to placing Kassidy on a bed in the Kittery apartment before leaving for work at nearby outlet stores.

Bortner-Conley's boyfriend, F. Jefferey Marshall, was at home watching television in the adjoining room, according to testimony at the trial.

Bortner-Conley and Marshall told police that Bortner pointed out the bruises on Kassidy's face and said, "Looks like sh-t, doesn't she?"

Both said Bortner indicated that Evans had beaten the child.

Marshall called police about 12:30 p.m. to report the toddler was unresponsive.

She was pronounced dead at York Hospital about an hour later.

☆ **Bortner**

Please turn to Page 2