

Accused drug kingpin wants OK for church

By Margaret Gibbons

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| Posted: Sunday, August 28, 2011 12:00 am

An accused Montgomery Township drug kingpin wants to go to church while he waits for his trial.

Anthony A. Dennis Sr., 39, of the 100 block of Thames Drive, also wants to start a job with a Bryn Mawr painting contractor, mow his lawn, sit in his backyard, retrieve his mail at the end of his driveway, go to the doctor's and meet with his lawyer at his Philadelphia office.

These requests were contained in a petition filed this week in Dennis' behalf by defense attorney A. Charles Peruto Jr.

Dennis, who last week waived his formal arraignment in Montgomery County Court and pleaded not guilty to the charges against him, was released from the county prison on Aug. 2 after a bondsman posted his \$100,000 bail.

Judge Thomas C. Branca, who had reduced Dennis' bail from \$2 million to \$1 million (10 percent), conditioned that reduction with an order confining Dennis to his home under electronically monitored house arrest.

Stating that his client is presumed innocent and has strong ties to the community, Peruto in his petition asked Branca to modify his house arrest order to provide for those limited requests.

The judge has not yet scheduled a hearing on the petition.

Dennis and his 34-year-old brother Michael Dennis of Philadelphia were among the 27 suspects arrested in May following a three-year multi-jurisdiction drug investigation into cocaine trafficking in Montgomery, Chester and Philadelphia counties. The two Dennis brothers headed that drug ring, authorities said.

Tredyffrin police in Chester County began their investigation of Dennis, who operated the "Heads Up" barbershop in the Wayne section of their township, in November 2008. Authorities believed that the barbershop served as a front for the drug operation.

More and more law enforcement agencies combined efforts over the next several years in pursuing the investigation including conducting surveillance and securing wiretaps on phones used by the two Dennis brothers and another suspect in the case.

The investigation culminated on May 18 when Dennis allegedly met with a supplier in Philadelphia to purchase cocaine to fill his clients' orders. Authorities said they seized 9 ounces of cocaine from the supplier and \$9,200 in cash from the vehicle Dennis was driving.

On that same day, 72 law enforcement officers fanned out over the region conducting 21 simultaneous raids.

Among the items police said they seized were: 4 pounds of cocaine with an estimated street value of \$204,800, 14 vehicles, a fishing boat, three handguns, including a MAC 10.45 caliber handgun, four shotguns, five rifles and two bulletproof vests.

Dennis lives with his wife of 22 years as well as his adult son and his elementary school daughter at the couple's Montgomery Township home.

While his wife owns and operates a hair salon and his son has a job and attends Temple University, Dennis is considered the primary supporter of his family, according to the petition.

Calling Dennis a "hard-working taxpayer," Peruto said in the petition that Dennis last year earned a gross income of \$91,467 from his barber shop.

Dennis, who needs employment to continue supporting his family, has been offered a job by Harley's Painting