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**Wtby Paper Notes Order To Release Smolinski Police File**

*Hearing supports release of records*

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WATERBURY — A hearing officer for the state Freedom of Information Commission has recommended publicly releasing some police files from the unsolved case of a Waterbury man who disappeared 3½ years ago.

The commission will act on the recommendation April 11, likely making public documents related to the initial missing person report of Billy Smolinski Jr., as well as those that mention a woman he formerly dated. Andy Thibault, a Litchfield private investigator who writes on the Internet about police and court matters, and with whom the Smolinski family has consulted, requested the records through the Freedom of Information Act in August.

By obtaining the records, Thibault hopes to examine “what leads were pursued, or what leads were not pursued,” he said Monday.

Waterbury police sought the FBI’s help in the case in the fall, saying the local department had exhausted all investigative avenues.

In related news, legislation sought by the Smolinski family that would change the way authorities handle missing person cases has been winding its way through the state House and Senate.