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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THOMAS JAMES NIARHOS CHARGED WITH FIRST-DEGREE MURDER FOR NOV. 22nd POTTSTOWN HOMICIDE

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (Nov. 25, 2023) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Pottstown Police Chief Mick Markovich announce the charging of Thomas James Niarhos, 15, of Stowe, with First-Degree Murder and other charges related to the murder of Jeremiah Waylon Hawkins, 39, who was currently experiencing homelessness.

The homicide occurred on Wednesday, Nov. 22, 2023. Pottstown Police were dispatched at 12:07 p.m. to South Hanover Street at Security Plaza. They arrived to find the victim, Jeremiah Hawkins, lying on South Hanover Street with an obvious gunshot wound to the head. He was pronounced dead at Pottstown Hospital. Niarhos was being held by witnesses and was immediately taken into custody by police. A .40 caliber Smith & Wesson semi-automatic firearm was recovered on scene. Detectives later determined the firearm belonged to the defendant's father.

A joint homicide investigation by Pottstown Police and Montgomery County Detectives found through multiple witness interviews and review of surveillance video that Niarhos had sought out Hawkins, and the two males were standing close together arguing, when Niarhos extended his arm toward Hawkins. Hawkins swung a tire at Niarhos, attempting to knock the gun out of his hand, but Niarhos fires a single shot at Hawkins' face, and the victim falls immediately. Niarhos fired a second time, then dropped the firearm and walked away, when he was detained by bystanders.

An autopsy was conducted on Hawkins' body by Dr. Khalil Wardak, a forensic pathologist with the Montgomery County Coroner's Office, which found that Hawkins had been shot once in the side of his face at close range. Dr. Wardak opined the cause of death was a gunshot wound to the head and the manner of death was homicide.

Niarhos was charged as an adult with First-Degree Murder, Third-Degree Murder, Possessing a Firearm by a Minor, Possessing an Instrument of Crime and other charges. Niarhos was arraigned by Magisterial District Judge Margaret Hunsicker on Nov. 22, 2023. No bail is available for First-Degree Murder, and he was remanded to

the Montgomery County Youth Center. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 11:30 a.m., Nov. 30, 2023, before Magisterial District Judge Scott T. Palladino.

The case will be prosecuted by Assistant Chief of Trials Lauren Marvel and Assistant District Attorney Anne O'Connell.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.