Sandra Birchmore / Matthew Farwell Trial

November 4, 2026 — Day 18 Witness Summary

Reporting source: Grant Smith Ellis (@GrantSmithEllis). This is an editorial reading aid derived from contemporaneous courtroom reporting, not an official or verbatim transcript. Statements in reported questions are not established facts. The linked original posts remain the source for quotations and chronology.

Court Proceedings Before Witness Testimony

Before the jury entered, counsel argued over digital-forensics exhibits and a proposed defense timeline. The government invoked Rule 412 concerning a message about another man potentially visiting Birchmore; the defense disputed that characterization. Judge Casper distinguished impeachment or necessary context from material offered without an applicable hearsay exception. The government withdrew its objection to exhibit 768 for a specified impeachment purpose; other proposed items, including 748 and 770, were not admitted as offered. The court preserved objections and allowed properly admissible constituent evidence to be offered separately. [X source] · [X source]

Daniel Loper — Defense Digital Forensic Analyst

Loper, owner of Granite Discovery, reviewed device extractions and related artifacts involving Birchmore's phones, MacBook Pro and Apple Watch, as well as Farwell's personal and work phones. He did not perform the original extractions himself. His testimony concerned the limits of recovering historical data, interpretation of recorded phone activity, and comparisons with the government's digital-forensics presentation. [X source] · [X source]

Devices and Apple Watch extraction

Loper observed an October 2026 extraction attempt involving Birchmore's Series 5 Apple Watch and described specialist software, passcodes, protective enclosures, and possible pairing with a phone. No February 1, 2021 health records were recovered directly from the watch. On cross, he could not establish whether the relevant software would have supported that watch model in February 2021, and he did not criticize investigators for failing to use a tool whose compatibility then was uncertain. [X source] · [X source] · [X source]

Messages and blocked-contact artifacts

Defense questioning examined message counts and blocked-contact records from Farwell's device. Birchmore's current and former phone numbers and an email address appeared among blocked entries. Loper distinguished the date on which a blocked-contact list refreshed from the unknown date when any individual entry was first blocked. The February 6 refresh is not itself proof of a February 6 blocking action. [X source] · [X source] · [X source]

> *"Well, you can't tell when the block occurred, but you can tell when the list of blocked contacts updates."*
>
> — Loper, as reported by Ellis [X source]

Questions also addressed a June 2020 exchange and what message records remained recoverable. The distinction between surviving records, possible missing data, and proof of what was originally sent remained important; a recovered database snapshot does not necessarily settle every historical exchange. [X source] · [X source]

Facebook cache, searches, video timing and step counts

Loper reviewed approximately 106 Facebook-cache images from the morning of February 1, 2021, including ribbon thumbnails. He distinguished application caches from Safari web activity and compared typed characters, suggested search completions, and a completed search about the color of the suicide ribbon. The artifacts supported examination of the sequence but did not independently establish Birchmore's intent or every key she pressed. [X source] · [X source] · [X source]

He also compared surveillance-video timestamps with phone artifacts, deriving a clock offset about three seconds different from another examiner's result. Apple Health step counts were discussed alongside video of Birchmore carrying her phone. Loper acknowledged that device model, carrying position and synchronization affect the interpretation of steps, and that device movement does not by itself prove a particular person's movements or consciousness. [X source] · [X source] · [X source]

Missing laptop extraction and preservation limits

A central defense issue was the loss of Birchmore's initial MacBook extraction. Loper had later extraction material and a PDF derivative but could not compare the original complete image against subsequent captures to identify every overwritten log. He discussed rotating Apple unified logs and data potentially affected by time, activity and device handling. He did not establish intentional destruction or the Massachusetts State Police's actual backup policy. [X source] · [X source] · [X source]

> *"We know the unified logs were written over because we couldn't see back to February."*
>
> — Loper, as reported by Ellis (excerpt) [X source]

Cross-examination and redirect

The government explored records absent from Farwell's devices despite many messages surviving on Birchmore's, and a search about recovering deleted messages using Cellebrite. Loper confirmed the phones had not been factory-reset when provided, but a search about deletion and recovery did not prove that a particular wipe occurred. He conceded precise unified-log lifespans vary and that he could not know which artifacts would have survived in an earlier examination. [X source] · [X source] · [X source]

Cross also addressed the Apple Watch passcode, the unsuccessful retrieval of historic watch health data, camera-clock methods, Birchmore's recovered phone position, and whether the absence of certain suicide-related searches or notes proved they never existed. The defense revisited incomplete extraction records, the old 2016 note, and the distinction between blocked-list updates and actual blocking dates. Several proposed questions were limited by objections. [X source] · [X source] · [X source] · [X source]

Proceedings Outside the Jury's Presence

Spoliation request

The defense sought an instruction related to the lost first laptop image and later handling of the MacBook. The government opposed an inference of improper destruction. Judge Casper declined the requested spoliation instruction on the showing presented, while preserving the defense's position. Missing or inaccessible records were not treated as proof of deliberate erasure. [X source] · [X source] · [X source]

Farwell's decision not to testify

Judge Casper conducted a personal colloquy on Farwell's choice whether to testify. He elected not to take the stand. That election is not evidence of guilt and should not be treated as a concession. The court discussed Friday closings and the expected start of jury deliberations. [X source]

> *"At this time, your honor, I elect not to testify."*
>
> — Farwell, as reported by Ellis [X source]

Dr. Thomas A. Andrew — Defense Forensic Pathologist

Dr. Andrew, a former New Hampshire chief medical examiner, reviewed autopsy and scene material, medical history, injury photographs, forensic reports and other case records. He did not conduct the original autopsy. His opinion depended on both physical findings and circumstances supplied in the review. [X source]

Scene, lividity, ligature and hyoid

Andrew described the seated or partially supported hanging scene, dependent changes in the body and the absence in some early reports of obvious struggle or dragging. He discussed lividity, blanching, injuries near the ligature furrow, and a fracture of the hyoid. The defense examined how textured fabric and movement might produce marks and how an incomplete suspension might operate. Some physical demonstrations or words were not fully audible in Ellis's reporting. [X source]

The government emphasized alternate explanations: a body can be moved without obvious dragging, neck compression can incapacitate quickly, some strangulations produce limited external injury, and a scene could theoretically be staged. None of these hypothetical possibilities, standing alone, established what happened to Birchmore. [X source]

Medical history and limits of the review

Andrew considered prior medical and psychiatric material, an earlier reported overdose, and discussion of sertraline. The prosecution challenged whether older records were being weighed without contemporaneous witnesses and protective context. Objections limited some psychiatric generalizations; those suggestions should not be restated as medical findings specific to Birchmore. [X source]

Cause and manner of death

> *"I would say cause hanging and manner undetermined."*
>
> — Andrew, as reported by Ellis [X source]

This is the central distinction in his conclusion: he did not certify either suicide or homicide as the manner of death. On cross, prosecutor Liz Riley compared his report language with oral suggestions that suicide might be more likely. Andrew agreed that his formal opinion did not favor suicide over homicide in the manner the question suggested. The report/testimony tension is preserved, not editorially reconciled. [X source] · [X source]

> *"Sir, just focus on my question, you did not answer that you favored suicide over homicide, you simply said you cannot rule out suicide, is that true?"*
>
> — Riley, as reported by Ellis [X source]

Cross-examination: injuries and assumptions

The government pressed Andrew's reliance on investigator accounts, failure to interview some people with potentially relevant information, and his evaluation of neck abrasions, possible defensive movement, broken necklace and hair. Andrew resisted characterizing several injuries as fingernail marks while acknowledging that some signs were nonspecific. The cross also addressed the literature associating hyoid fractures with strangulation more frequently than hanging and his reliance on images rather than directly examining the bone. [X source]

The government examined DNA testimony and questioned whether fraternal twins Matthew and William Farwell had indistinguishable profiles. Andrew corrected an earlier imprecise description: autosomal DNA profiles of fraternal twins differ, although paternal Y-STR profiles can match. No DNA premise should be collapsed into a claim the brothers had identical DNA. [X source]

Redirect and the close of evidence

Brief defense follow-up addressed body movement, possible marks and the scene. Objections and a sidebar limited the final exchanges. The defense then rested. Jurors were told there would be no session Thursday, November 5, and that closings and instructions were expected Friday, November 6, before deliberations. [X source] · [X source]

Source & Editorial Note

This summary is a condensation of Grant Smith Ellis's contemporaneous November 4, 2026 X reporting, not an official transcript. The uploaded source audits describe 321 captured posts: 287 in the main selected thread and 34 outside it. The full boxed court log uses all 287 thread posts. Witness-summary passages compress cumulative questioning, preserve contested issues and rulings, and distinguish reporter observations, attorney premises, and evidence. Exact linked source posts should be consulted where wording is material.