

2 chosen for jury in killing of boyfriend

By Tucker McCormack
Register Staff

MILFORD — Jury selection started Wednesday in the murder trial of a West Haven woman accused of stabbing her live-in boyfriend to death during a fight in the couple's trailer home in West Haven last year.

Lawyers for both sides screened a pool of prospective jurors in Superior Court in Milford. A 12-member jury will decide the fate of Charissa Willette, 19. Two jurors were picked Wednesday. Jury selection is scheduled to resume Friday.

Willette is charged with murder in the killing of her boyfriend, Kevin Finch, 21, of Milford.

Police said the couple argued April 26 at about 3:30 p.m. in the their trailer home at 690 Jones Hill Road and Willette allegedly grabbed a butcher knife and plunged it into her boyfriend's chest, just above the heart.

A quarrel over money precipitated the killing, police sources said. Willette, who is free on \$250,000 bail, has pleaded innocent. She faces life in prison if convicted.

State's Attorney Mary Galvin and Willette's attorney, Tara Knight of New Haven, questioned several prospective jurors about their backgrounds, education and philosophical beliefs, trying to elicit any sympathies or biases that might prevent them from serving impartially.

According to authorities, Willette grabbed a knife and backed Finch into a bedroom at the other end of the trailer, where blood spots were found. As Finch was trapped inside the bedroom, Willette stabbed through the door with the knife several times.

Knight, however, claimed Finch "became enraged" when a glass of water was spilled and Willette refused to clean it up. She said Willette grabbed the knife in self-defense after Finch choked Willette, spit on her, threw her into a couch and shouted vulgarities at her.

Willette gave a formal statement to investigators, in which she admitted to stabbing Finch, police said.

Finch was taken to Yale-New Haven Hospital by ambulance and later pronounced dead, police said.

Both sides anticipate having a full jury with two alternates within a week. The trial is expected to