

Last-minute plea bargain halts murder trial

A 54-year-old Waco man who was expected to stand trial Monday in connection with the June shooting death of a Hillsboro man was given a probated sentence Friday in 54th State District Court after he was allowed to plead guilty to unlawfully carrying a weapon on a licensed premises.

Murder charges will not be pursued against Elvis Darrell McGaughy Sr. of 3313 Bosque, who prosecutors say had a "pretty good self-defense story."

McGaughy was arrested June 14 for the shooting death of Lelas Edward

Richardson, 41, who was shot at least three times with a .22-caliber pistol outside Vela's Lounge, 613 South Eleventh.

McGaughy pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of voluntary manslaughter on Nov. 18, but decided to change his plea and not accept the state-recommended sentence of eight years' probation after a pre-sentence investigation was conducted.

So instead of standing trial Monday on a murder charge, McGaughy was allowed to plead guilty to the weapons

charge in exchange for a 10-year probated sentence.

Prosecutors said the shooting death stemmed from a barroom argument, but that the chances of getting a conviction on the murder charge looked bleak. They accepted the guilty plea on the weapons charge because it was an easier case to prove, prosecutors said.

Unlawfully carrying a weapon on a licensed premises is a third-degree felony that carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

"He pleaded guilty to a lesser offense, but got more probation time (than initially was offered him)," said Assistant District Attorney Crawford Long.

Court officials said witnesses saw McGaughy with the revolver inside the bar, but that no one actually saw the shots being fired that killed Richardson.

Long said that Richardson, a convicted felon, had almost twice the legal level of alcohol in his blood at the time of his death.