

Flynn argues against prison time in Russia investigation

By ERIC TUCKER AND CHAD DAY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Lawyers for Trump’s former national security adviser Michael Flynn asked a judge on Tuesday to spare him prison time, saying he had devoted his career to his country and taken responsibility for an “uncharacteristic error in judgment.”

The arguments to the judge echoed those of special counsel Robert Mueller’s office, which last week said that Flynn’s cooperation — including 19 meetings with investigators — was so extensive that he was entitled to avoid prison when he is sentenced next week.

“Having made a serious error in judgment, for which he has shown true contrition, he recognized it was consistent with the values by which he has led his life simply to provide the facts to those charged with enforcing our laws,” his lawyers wrote in requesting a sentence of probation and community service. “On the day he entered his guilty plea, he said he was ‘working to set things right.’ He has done so.”

Flynn, who pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about conversations during the presidential transition period with the then-Russian ambassador to the United States, will become the first White House official punished in the special counsel’s ongoing probe into whether



AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta, File
In this July 10, 2018 file photo, former Trump national security adviser Michael Flynn leaves federal courthouse in Washington, following a status hearing.

the Trump campaign coordinated with Russia during the 2016 presidential election. Flynn’s absence from the public eye, despite entreat-

ies from supporters to take an aggressive stance against the Russia investigation, has made him a source of continuing public intrigue. His

sentencing has the makings of a bookend moment for the investigation given that Flynn — a visible presence on the campaign trail, in high-level transition talks and in the chaotic early days of the administration — was an early, and pivotal, part of the case who appeared to enjoy the president’s sympathy even after his departure from the White House.

Central to the investigation are Flynn’s December 2016 phone discussions of Obama administration sanctions with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak, conversations that triggered intelligence community alarms and led to his ouster from the administration after officials maintained that he had lied to them

about the communications. They also prompted a Jan. 24, 2017, FBI interview at which Mueller says Flynn denied having discouraged Kislyak from an aggressive response to the sanctions, which had been imposed on the Kremlin for election interference that U.S. officials have said was aimed at helping Trump win office. He also told the FBI he had no recollection of a follow-up call with Kislyak in which the ambassador said Russia would moderate its response to the sanctions.

Tuesday’s defense filing did not contain new information about Flynn’s cooperation or provide a full explanation for why he made false statements to investigators.

MUSIC: Last year they used grant money to buy some larger instruments

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the band with different concepts, whether figuring out rhythm, chords, or keeping sound in check,” he said.

Armand Larive Middle School band director Cristian Mata also received a grant, which will allow him to purchase a new xylophone for the school’s concert band. Mata received \$2,265 for that purchase.

The Hermiston Education Foundation, which is funded by community donations and gifts, supports academic and artistic programs throughout the district through its grant programs, and provides scholarships to four Hermiston High School seniors each year. This year, they awarded \$20,839 in grant money.

McClanahan said the band teachers regularly apply for grants to keep up with the needs for their students and instruments.

“Our percussion that get used for marching band tends to take a really bad beating,” he said. “What we had before was not built for that. The instruments were falling apart.”

Last year, he said, they



Junior Kevin Sams plays the tenor drums during the fight song during a winter sports pep rally on Tuesday at Hermiston High School.

used grant money to buy some larger instruments that are often difficult for families to afford, like a bass and a French horn. The

grant, along with money he was allotted by HHS principal Tom Spoo, allowed him to purchase \$32,000 worth of supplies and repairs.

He said keeping up with maintenance needs is a struggle for most music programs. “I came from a small dis-

trict before here,” he said. “It’s a similar situation. Instruments are old, they need repairing. You make do with what you have.”

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

MIDCO: Additionally, Midco brought in a recruiter to address its driver shortage

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further compounded if a driver calls out.

Matt Yoshioka, the district’s director of curriculum, instruction and assessment, said drivers are now transporting larger loads of kids than before, making it more difficult to manage students while they drive.

Yoshioka declined to call

student behavior on the bus bullying, preferring to refer to it as “mistreatment.” But the district has responded by sometimes placing staff members on bus routes to help manage students while the driver focuses on the road.

Yoshioka defended Midco, saying the company was doing everything it could to bolster its staff

but was suffering from a low-unemployment labor market that sees potential drivers looking elsewhere for opportunities.

For its part, Midco is literally under new management.

Chuck Moore, Midco’s regional vice president, said he arrived on the job this week and a new area manager was hired in

September.

Additionally, Midco brought in a recruiter to address its driver shortage and have six drivers-in-training that the company is hoping to convert into new employees.

Moore said they welcome complaints or concerns, and if a parent has a complaint about an incident that happened on-bus, the

company will check video footage and address their concerns.

Even if the school district were to part ways with Midco, district officials say some of the other options aren’t significantly better.

Yoshioka said Midco is often the only bidder when the district puts out a request for proposal for transportation services, and the next

closest school bus company is based in Spokane.

And Fritsch considered the school district operating its own bus fleet a “last resort” because of its multi-million-dollar start-up cost.

As for the bus stop on the corner of Frazer and Fourth, Yoshioka and Midco officials said they’re in the process of moving the stop away from the tank.

ELFERING: ‘That happens that way in many nonpartisan races and statute permits it’

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liaison commissioner to seek increases in personnel, budget or operations. The system allows each commissioner to act as a “de facto” manager to the departments they work with and the “power becomes unequal among commissioners.”

“But a county executive would only have persuasive power with the commissioners,” Elfering stated, “and the board of commissioners ... have the power to enact change, including changing county executives (if needed).”

He also urged the committee to revise the election process to allow commissioner candidates who receive a majority of the vote in the May primary to win then and not have to run in the November general election.

“That happens that way in many nonpartisan races and statute permits it,” Elfering said.

He recognized this problem, he said, when he won in the primary two years ago with more than 60 percent of the vote and still

had to win in November because the charter requires voters to elect commissioners in the general election. This year, John Shafer earned 52.4 percent of the vote in May and had to run in November. The process opened the door for a write-in gambit to retain Givens, an effort that failed.

“The chances of a write-in campaign being successful are nearly zero when there is a candidate on the ballot,” Elfering said, but the county elections office had to put in the labor to verify hundreds of signatures. If the county can make the election process more efficient and remain fair, he said, all the better.

The other matter is what to do with a lame duck commissioner. Umatilla County from Nov. 7 — the day after the general election — until Wednesday had 20 working days. Givens has clocked six days of work in that span. According to the county board’s online calendar, Givens has been “out” part or all of the other 14 days.

County commissioners have an annual sal-

ary of \$92,664. Givens is not burning vacation time, because the commissioners don’t get that perk. County counsel Doug Olsen said the purpose of the public calendar is for the commissioners to let the public know what they are doing, but Givens has not said why he has been out.

Murdock echoed that and said Givens also does not tell him nor the board’s executive secretary his reasons for not being at work.

“The problem is the commissioners are basically accountable to the voters and not to us,” Murdock said, and barring any ethics violations, commissioners are free to do what they want.

Elfering said a lame duck commissioner has the freedom to push policy that may not be popular but would benefit the county, but handling the final days in office is a matter of individual choice.

Givens did not return a call Tuesday for comment. The public calendar shows he is working Wednesday, and Thursday morning is on a Hermiston radio program.

EAST OREGONIAN

Hermiston Herald

EARLY HOLIDAY DEADLINES

Christmas deadlines:
Tues., 12/25 East Oregonian - Fri., 12/21
Wed., 12/26 Hermiston Herald - Thurs. 12/20

New Year’s deadlines:
Tues., 1/1 East Oregonian - Fri., 12/28
Wed., 1/2 Hermiston Herald - Thurs. 12/27

Holiday Hours for both offices:
Christmas Eve: 8am-Noon
Closed Christmas Day

New Years Eve: 8am-Noon
Closed New Years Day