

THE RECORD

Florence man under investigation for MVA near dock

Alcohol is suspected in the accident but formal charges have not been made while Oregon State Police investigate

Following the approval of a search warrant by a Lane County judge on March 22, Florence resident Dennis Lee Witten, 44, is under investigation for allegedly causing a crash while intoxicated on March 10. The accident resulted in injury to himself and his wife, 36-year-old Ashlie Cathryn Laughlin.

According to an affidavit submitted last week in Lane Circuit Court, the crash happened at 8:40 p.m., when the couple's vehicle, a blue Nissan Pathfinder, rolled into the Siuslaw River near the crab dock off South Jetty Road.

The incident allegedly occurred when, according to a

statement made in the affidavit by Laughlin, the two attempted to go four-wheeling after sharing a half gallon of Fireball whiskey with three other crabbers on the dock.

Laughlin told an Oregon State Police trooper that, prior to arriving at the dock, the two had eaten dinner in Florence around 5 p.m., when Witten had "at least one beer."

Laughlin said she was half-asleep when the crash occurred, and only remembered being bounced around in the car before hearing Witten yelling, "Get up, get out," stated the affidavit.

An ambulance arrived a short time later and treated Laughlin for an ankle injury,

along with Witten, who sustained broken teeth and a deep gash on his lower lip that required stitches.

Witten admitted to consuming two beers at dinner a few hours earlier, but denied drinking any whiskey on the dock despite a description in the affidavit by a trooper remarking that Witten "smelled strongly of alcohol."

The two were transported to Peace Harbor Hospital for treatment, where a blood sample was drawn by staff. Witten refused to provide a sample to troopers, prompting OSP to apply for the search warrant in order to obtain the sample from the hospital.

According to the affidavit,

Witten agreed to a handful of sobriety tests while laying in a hospital bed in a neck restraint. He was unable to recite the alphabet from M to Z despite two attempts. He was also unable to count backward from 99 to 86, although he was able to touch his thumb to each of his fingers while counting, according to the trooper.

When asked to provide a blood sample, Witten reportedly stated, "I don't think I'm comfortable with that."

Though the investigation by OSP is continuing, according to court records Witten has not been formally charged as of March 27.

POLICE LOG

<p>Florence Police Mar. 22 Menacing was reported at the Siuslaw Bridge on Highway 101.</p> <p>Mar. 23 Driving while suspended was reported on Highway 101.</p> <p>Mar. 24 Criminal mischief was reported on Park Village Drive.</p> <p>Fire was reported on Sutton Lake Road.</p> <p>Accident, with injury, was reported at Driftwood II in the Oregon Dunes National Park.</p> <p>Animal abuse was reported in the 1300 block of Bay Street.</p> <p>Fire was reported on Highway 101 at milepost 171.</p> <p>Theft was reported in the</p>	<p>1300 block of Bay Street.</p> <p>Arrest, with warrant, was reported in the 1400 block of Highway 101.</p> <p>Mar. 25 Harassment was reported in the 1700 block of 12th Street.</p> <p>Hit-and-run accident was reported in the 5000 block of Highway 126.</p> <p>Mar. 26 Harassment was reported in the 1600 block of Highway 101.</p> <p>Accident, with unknown injury, was reported at the Rhododendron Drive Coast Guard Station.</p> <p>Trespass was reported in the 2400 block of Highway 101.</p> <p>Trespass was reported in the 90000 block of Upper North Fork Road.</p>
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Commissioner candidates to attend forum April 6

With the elected terms of three of five Lane County Commissioners due to expire soon, Friday, April 6, marks a singular opportunity to join the City Club of Florence as Western Lane Commissioner Jay Bozievich and candidate Nora Kent present their positions on a variety of county issues.

The free noon forum, hosted at the Class Act Theatre, 509 Kingwood St. will offer a regional opportunity for voters to ask tough questions on issues of economic, educational, social and environmental concern facing the county during the next four years. Questions can be submitted in writing when the doors open at 11:30 a.m. or they may be asked during the meeting.

Kent is a long-time resident of Lane County, having raised her family in the River Road/Santa Clara area before moving to the Florence area 14 years ago, where she continues to work as an instructor for Lane Community College. She has been an active advocate for building affordable housing, increasing rural patrols, increasing the number of healthcare providers and bringing family-wage jobs to Lane County through the citizen initiative process.

Bozievich is running for his third term as West Lane Commissioner.

He advocates for increasing the supply and diversity of housing, especially for the work force in Lane County. He would like to improve the capacity of the public safety system and implement restorative justice programs.

For more information, contact Ruth at socialpollinator@gmail.com.



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