Deschutes sheriff captain sentenced five years for stealing $200,000 in public funds

Blue Mountain Eagle

On Thursday, Sept. 8, Scott Raymond Beard, 46, a former Deschutes County Sheriff's Office captain and resident of Deschutes County, was sentenced to five years in prison by U.S. District Judge Michael J. McShane for stealing over $200,000 in public funds he was entrusted to manage, according to a press release from the United States Attorney's Office.

At least 63 times over a two-year period, Beard falsified records to steal money designated for use in combating drug crimes, the release states.

At the sentencing hearing, Deschutes County Sheriff Shane Nelson attested to the damage Beard's abuse of trust caused to the community, and to the men and women working in law enforcement. Sheriff Nelson explained that Beard "betrayed the ideals of the law enforcement profession. He was in a position of absolute trust, and he abused this trust for his own gain."

Judge McShane acknowledged the importance of citizens being able to have complete trust in those called to serve their communities as police officers. When imposing the sentence, he admonished Beard that the community has to know that this conduct will not be tolerated. Judge McShane pointed to Beard's pervasive violation of the public trust placed in him by Sheriff Nelson, fellow law enforcement officers, state prosecutors and his own community. Judge McShane further ordered Beard to serve three years of supervised release after he completes his prison term.

During the investigation, Beard told federal agents that he donated $10,000 of the stolen money to a South African orphanage. Orphanage records show that his actual donation was less than $92. In reality, Beard laundered the money through the bank account of his mistress, Krista Jean Mudrick, showering her with cash to support a lifestyle that included vacations and multiple cosmetic surgeries for Mudrick.

The sentencing followed Beard's May 2016 guilty plea to two counts of theft concerning programs receiving federal funds and two counts of money laundering. An audit ordered by newly appointed Sheriff Nelson uncovered Beard's crimes. After a federal grand jury returned an indictment against Beard and Mudrick, the Sheriff's office fired him. Mudrick has also been federally charged with making materially false statements to federal agents investigating Beard's crimes.

U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams said, "Law enforcement officers who steal public funds harm the entire community. We rely on the honesty and integrity of every law enforcement officer to do the right thing. Beard's greed undermined the good work done by his fellow officers and this sentence sends a clear signal that crimes committed by law enforcement officers will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law."

Special Agent in Charge Darrell Waldon of IRS Criminal Investigation said, "Criminals are sentenced to prison every day for actions driven by greed, but the level of greed that Beard sunk to is really beyond belief. This is an individual who, as a member of the law enforcement community, took an oath to uphold the law."

The FBI and IRS-CI jointly investigated this case, and it was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christopher Cardani and Frank R Papagni Jr.

Police arrest Prairie City man on assault, drug charges

Blue Mountain Eagle

Police arrested a 26-year-old Prairie City man on assault and drug possession charges early Friday morning.

John Day Police Sgt. Damon Rand arrested Kristopher Goodwin on charges of fourth-degree domestic assault and possession of methamphetamine, according to a press release from John Day Police Chief Richard Gray.

Police responded to a call at about 12:30 a.m. Friday of a female being assaulted by her boyfriend on the 100 block of South McHaley Street in Prairie City, Gray said.

The 45-year-old victim reported she had been hit by Goodwin and that he had thrown things at her, Gray said. Goodwin also called 911, he said, but hung up after giving the location of the assault.

After Rand's investigation, Goodwin was arrested and booked in the Grant County Jail.

John Day Police Chief Richard Gray

LETTERS

Continued from Page A4

'Time for a reality check?'

To the Editor:

Consider the timelines: The sheriff investigates the Monument Rural Fire District fiasco and determines it is a civil, not a criminal, case. Then the grand jury indicts a participant of the fire district. The sheriff then deputizes this person under indictment by the grand jury. Finally, a circuit court jury finds the defendant guilty of three counts of felony theft. Time for a reality check?

Fred B. Fitzgerald
Monument

Firewise techniques reduce wildfire risk

To the Editor:

The Oregonian article "Burned" on the Canyon Creek Complex missed two aspects. Should houses be built in fire prone landscapes? And did homeowners use Firewise techniques to lower the risk of fires burning their houses?

While I sympathize with people for the tragedy of losing their homes, earlier actions could have reduced this tragedy. Living in a forested setting poses wildfire risks. Forests will always burn. In my work as a planning consultant, I ask clients who live in forested settings, "What will you do when the fire comes? That's when, not if." One important tool planners should use is not allowing houses in high-risk forest areas. We use zoning to prohibit houses in flood plains. What stops us from zoning high fire risk areas as unbuildable? Katherine Daniels with Oregon DLCD has written, "effective land use planning has perhaps the greatest potential for reducing wildfire threat" (Hood River News, Nov. 7, 2015).

Protecting homes during fires is expensive. Oregon Department of Forestry estimates the average cost of protecting a home in a rural area is $31,545 versus $319 in an already developed area. And the danger to firefighters is real. The 2013 Arizona Yarnell Hill Fire killed 19 firefighters working to protect homes in a high fire risk area.

Given that houses were developed in the forest along Highway 395, did homeowners take actions to reduce their fire risk, such as clearing trees and brush around their structures? There are many photos showing burning homes with trees close to the house. Homeowners should have removed trees and brush within 30-100 feet of their homes. These techniques are described in the Firewise program. ODF staff can advise homeowners and reimburse them for costs of vegetation treatment.

Scientists tell us forest fires will be more frequent and get larger. The Forest Service is overwhelmed with high costs and insufficient firefighting funds. To help deal with this issue planning departments must develop regulations that prohibit building houses in high fire risk areas.

Retroactively, homeowners in high fire risk areas should be required to remove trees and brush close to their homes.

Jurgen A. Hess
Hood River

A meet and greet with
TODD MCKINLEY,
candidate for Grant County Sheriff, will be held at the Canyon City Community Hall from 2:00-4:00 on Saturday, September 17th, 2016. Mr. McKinley will give a presentation, followed by a question and answer period. In his campaign, Todd speaks forthrightly on the issues, gives straight answers to questions, and puts forth real solutions to issues. He wants to meet with you to hear what is important to you. For more information, check his Facebook page, Todd McKinley for Sheriff, or call 541-932-4859.

COPS & COURTS

Arrests and citations in the Blue Mountain Eagle are taken from the logs of law enforcement agencies. Every effort is made to report the court disposition of arrest cases.

Grant County Sheriff

CANYON CITY — The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week of Sept. 1-7:

- Concealed handgun licenses: 3
- Average inmates: 12
- Bookings: 5
- Releases: 4
- Fingerprints: 5
- Civil papers: 8
- Warrants processed: 5
- Asst./welfare check: 3

Justice Court

CANYON CITY — The Grant County Justice Court reported the following fines and judgments:

- Driving with a suspended license: Lucas Michael Mericantante, 53, Eugene, July 29, fined $435; Robert H. Bryant, 41, Prairie City, Aug. 9, fined $435.
- Driving uninsured: Lucas Michael Mericantante, 53, Eugene, July 29, fined $260; Dakota Andrew Clark, 21, Portland, May 18, fined $260; Jeffery Paul Thomas, 44, Hillsboro, July 2, fined $260; Brian Brandon Burk, 43, Sweet Home, Sept. 3, fined $260; Robert H. Bryant, 41, Prairie City, Aug. 9, fined $260; Dakota Andrew Clark, 21, Portland, May 18, fined $260; Brian Brandon Burk, 43, Sweet Home, Sept. 3, fined $260.
- Failure to obey traffic control device: Heidi Louise Gosson, 35, Hillsboro, Aug. 19, fined $220.
- Violation of the speed limit: Christina Mary Grouten, 24, Bend, 60/25 zone, June 28, fined $370.
- Exceeding the speed limit: Gary Paul Olsen, 75, Bend, 77/65 zone, Aug. 9, fined $220.
- Dog as a public nuisance: Zechariah D. Wilson, 24, John Day, July 12, fined $260 to be dismissed through diversion without further convictions prior to Feb. 9. Paid $48 restitution to victim.
- Violation of the basic speed rule: Bethany Dobbins Corwin, 39, Redmond, Aug. 28, 70/55 zone, fined $160; Lucas Michael Mericantante, 53, Eugene, July 29, fined $260.
- Open container of alcohol: Jeffery Paul Thomas, 44, Hillsboro, July 2, fined $260.

Dispatch

John Day dispatch worked 137 calls during the week of Sept. 5-11. Along with the various traffic warnings, trespassing, injured animals, noise complaints and juvenile complaints, these calls included:

- **John Day Police**:

Sept. 5: Responded to an animal complaint and cited a 26-year-old John Day woman for keeping a dog as a nuisance.

Sept. 7: Off-duty police officer reported a possible drunk driver resulting in a Utah man being cited for reckless driving and speeding.

Sept. 9: Responded to a report of domestic violence in Prairie City. Received information regarding a wanted felon and arrested a 27-year-old Prairie City man.

- **Grant County Sheriff**:

Sept. 9: Responded to a report of domestic violence in Mt. Vernon.

Sept. 11: Arrested a 30-year-old Bend man on a Grant County warrant. Responded to a report of an accident with injuries near Granite.

- **John Day ambulance**:

Sept. 9: Responded to a report of a 38-year-old male suffering a possible heart attack.

I would like to thank everyone who helped during my car accident on August 31st.

A special thank you to Rusty Rule, Scott Shaffer, Glenn Palmer, Melinda Moss, Blue Mountain Hospital & EMTs, and Officer Daniel Stover, OSP.

Sincerely,
Drew Harmer

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