

## Lee Police Chief Joseph Buffis charged with extorting money from 2 facing prostitution-related charges

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**UPDATE, 7:30 p.m.:** Buffis' lawyer says he "has done absolutely nothing wrong."



*FILE-- In this Sept. 16, 2011 file photo, Joseph Buffis poses for a photo as the new police chief in Lee, Mass. Authorities say a federal grand jury returned an indictment Thursday, Aug. 8, 2013 against Lee Police Chief Joseph Buffis, alleging he extorted a \$4,000 donation from two people who were facing prostitution-related charges. Buffis also faces three counts of money laundering. (AP Photo/Ben Garver, Berkshire Eagle)*

SPRINGFIELD — Following a nearly year-long joint FBI and Massachusetts State Police investigation, Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Breslow filed four criminal charges against Lee Police Chief Joseph Buffis in federal district court in Springfield on Thursday morning that involve allegations he extorted \$4,000 from two facing prostitution-related charges.

Buffis was charged with three counts of money laundering and one count of extortion by wrongful use of fear under color of official right. A court date has not been set.

A statement from the U.S. Attorney's Office said:

"It is alleged that in February 2012 Buffis, 55, of Pittsfield, acting in his official capacity as Lee Police Chief, extorted a \$4,000 'donation' from two individuals who were facing prostitution-related charges," according to a statement released by the US Attorney's office.

"The 'donation' was made payable to the Edward J. Laliberte Toy Fund, a holiday toy fund that Buffis controlled. Buffis deposited the \$4,000 check into the Toy Fund's bank account and quickly withdrew \$3,990 which he then deposited into a joint bank account that he operated with his wife. The diverted money was then used to pay for various personal expenses. Buffis is alleged to have lied to law enforcement about the disposition of

the funds."

Contacted Thursday, Lee Town Administrator Robert Nason said: "This is the first I have heard of it." Nason said he would be unable to discuss the matter until he reviews the documents.

A call was placed to the Lee Police Department and a message was left for Buffis. A Lee Police Department employee contacted Thursday said Buffis is on vacation.

U.S. vs. Joseph Buffis Indictment by masslive