

Boone County sheriff resigns amid prostitution investigation

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Boone County Sheriff Ken Campbell resigned abruptly Thursday, citing an investigation of the Boone County-Hamilton County Drug Task Force and the FBI involving "alleged misconduct over the last three to four years with an alleged prostitute."

The Star spoke recently to a woman who identified herself as a prostitute and who said that she and Campbell began a consensual sexual relationship in November 2010 that continued until a few months ago.

The 32-year-old woman insisted Campbell never paid for their sexual encounters, even though she typically charges \$200 an hour. She did however, say that Campbell knew she was a prostitute before the relationship began.

"I met him in a shooting class," she said. "I actually ended up using his (gun)."

The woman also said that on April 29, two detectives interviewed her about her relationship with Campbell. The interview took about three hours, she said.

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In his written statement Thursday, Campbell said he had done nothing illegal, although he acknowledged "errors of judgment."

"Certain allegations have recently arisen in regards to my conduct. While I believe I have committed no illegal acts, I must apologize for serious errors of judgment in my personal life. I have thoughtlessly and deeply hurt my family, friends, co-workers and those who placed their trust in me," Campbell said in the written statement.

"For now I am preparing to submit my retirement paperwork forthwith."

The Star's efforts to reach Campbell for comment Thursday were unsuccessful. He is married with two adult sons.

The news apparently was delivered to a stunned Sheriff's Department at a 7 p.m. staff meeting on Thursday, according to a statement from the department.

Campbell's statement continues:

"I will make no excuses for my actions because there are no excuses. I also realize that some might believe that all my previous words about honor, duty and responsibility now seem

hypocritical. While I completely understand those concerns, I would just say that I did, and still do, believe in those ideals even if I did not live up to them in my own personal life.

"I will have no further statement on this matter and would ask for privacy to regain the trust of my loving wife Shari and our family who has needlessly suffered because of my self-centered actions. I will also work to again be worthy of the trust that so many placed in me over the years."

It is not yet known whether Campbell will drop out of the race for the District 3 seat on the Boone County Council, where he is running unopposed as a Republican. He made no reference to that in his statement.

Chief Deputy Major Michael T. Nielsen of the Boone County Sheriff's Department.

Chief Deputy Major Mike Nielsen, who will take over as acting sheriff, said in an interview Thursday that his main priority is to restore the morale of the department of 30 sworn deputies and another 50 or so communications and jail officers, reserve deputies and support staff.

"It's my goal to pick up everybody's morale and steer this ship back on course," Nielsen said.

"Obviously this is something that is devastating to the family of Ken Campbell, devastating to the department and devastating to me personally because I have worked with him for the past 25 years."

Nielsen said he first learned of the allegations against Campbell on June 13 and he said he has faced a "whirlwind this past week just trying to resolve some of these issues."

"It's going to take a while to get through this. They know that," Nielsen said of his co-workers. "But we have some very strong, very dedicated people in every department here. We will come out of this OK."

In the news release headlined "Shocking News Stuns The Boone County Sheriff's Office," Nielsen said "Personally and professionally, I am deeply disappointed and extremely upset by this news,"

"When I learned of the allegations a few days ago, I wanted to believe with all my heart that the allegations were false. I gathered facts and verified them with Sheriff Campbell. I then met with the county attorney and afterward I asked Sheriff Campbell to resign from the Sheriff's Office. I believe that stepping down is not only what is best for the citizens of Boone County and the employees of the Sheriff's Office, but it is also the right thing to do."

As for criminal charges or further investigation, Nielsen said in the release, "At this point, I simply do not know."

Nielsen has been the chief deputy for the Boone County Sheriff's Office since 2007. He has been involved in Boone County law enforcement for more than 30 years. Nielsen recently won the

Republican nomination for sheriff in the spring primary and hopes to succeed Campbell.

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In the written release, Nielsen said he told staff at the end of the meeting Thursday:

"As hard as this situation may seem. ... we will work through it together. I make a solid promise to each of you, I will lead this office to the best of my ability and give each of you the opportunity to help rebuild what has been taken away. A strong organization is only as good as the great people together combined.

"I am looking at this as an opportunity to start fresh and begin to implement some positive changes that will affect each and every one of you.

"The five points of our value star have been tarnished. They are still our value points, and we will continue to make them our foundation."

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