

Winona County deputy fired after prostitution soliciting charges [postbulletin.com](#)

2015 Cop Solicit Prostitute Josh Morken

WINONA — A deputy in the Winona County Sheriff's Office has been terminated days after being charged with three counts of soliciting a prostitute in Winona County District Court.

Josh Morken, 47, was released from employment on March 6 due to "employee misconduct" and "conduct unbecoming of an officer," said Winona County Personnel Director and Interim Administrator Maureen Holte. She declined to release any further details on Morken's termination, citing an arbitration process that's expected to take months to complete.

A search of court records revealed Morken was charged April 27 with three counts of prostitution-patron-engage in with 18-year-old or older. All three charges are misdemeanors with maximum penalties of 90 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine for each offense.

Morken is scheduled to be arraigned June 15 before Winona County District Judge Mary Leahy. He's not yet entered an initial plea.

Winona County Sheriff Ron Ganrude confirmed Morken had been terminated as a deputy but declined further comment.

According to the criminal complaint, the Rochester Police Department was assigned to investigate Morken on Oct. 1, 2014, after the Bloomington Police Department found evidence that Morken had contacted two prostitutes through a website that includes prostitution information, to exchange cash for sex on three occasions in 2014.

The two women, who are not named in Morken's criminal complaint, were arrested on suspicion of being involved in sex trafficking; it's unclear if they've been formally charged. However, both women named Morken as a client during a Jan. 6 interview with the Bloomington Police Department, according to the complaint.

The women also had Morken's credit card information, which they say was used to purchase hotel rooms, food and to pay for ads on a website that includes prostitution information.

The sexual encounters all took place in Morken's home in Winona, according to the complaint. He never revealed he was a law enforcement officer, but he would give her tips on how not to get "busted," according to the complaint. He also said the police car parked on the street belonged to a neighbor.

Phone records indicate Morken and the woman made multiple phone calls in 2014 and exchanged more than 900 text messages between June 29 and Oct. 1, according to the complaint. The investigator who reviewed Morken's phone records also discovered he contacted

"at least 13 numbers advertising prostitution services between June 29, 2014, and March 3, 2015."

Authorities executed a search warrant of Morken's home on March 24, 2015. A wire transfer receipt to the woman was found along with a note reference Minnesota's prostitution statute, according to the complaint.

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