

Correctional officer at jail charged with alleged sexual contact with an inmate

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Era Associate Editor | Posted: Tuesday, February 19, 2008 12:00 am

A correctional officer at the McKean County Jail in Smethport has been charged with having alleged inappropriate sexual contact with an inmate, according to court documents released on Tuesday.

Jay Gerald Beeman, 44, of 2 Spring St., Bradford, is facing institutional sexual assault charges, a third-degree felony, following a series of alleged incidents with a known 30-year-old female inmate between Dec. 31, 2007, and Feb. 12 while employed as a correctional officer supervisor at the jail, according to court papers filed in Magisterial District Judge William Todd's office.

According to the court documents, Beeman and the inmate allegedly kissed on at least four occasions and the inmate also allegedly touched Beeman in the genital area.

Commissioner Chairman Joe DeMott confirmed Tuesday night that Beeman was suspended by acting warden Debbie Morlock pending the outcome of an investigation. Beeman was suspended after officials became aware of the incidents.

There was no word on whether the suspension was with or without pay.

However, officials said the inmate remains incarcerated at the jail. The Era does not release the name of sexual assault victims.

Beeman was arraigned before Todd Tuesday afternoon. Bail was set at ,10,000, which he posted and was released, according to Kane-based state police. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for March 10 in front of Todd.

Trooper Gary Stuckey, who investigated the case, declined to release any further information when reached at the state police barracks Tuesday night.

News of the alleged sexual assault comes less than two weeks after District Attorney John Pavlock revealed that videotapes of alleged assaults involving inmates at the jail were in the possession of his office and the county prison board.

County officials have been focused on the operation of the jail since former warden Tim Woodruff's resignation from the post on Feb. 4. In announcing his resignation, Woodruff claimed he hadn't received any support from the commissioners or prison board.

Woodruff was replaced by Morlock, who is serving as acting warden as the search is under way for a permanent replacement. Morlock served as deputy warden under Woodruff.

In regards to the tapes, Pavlock said they involve three incidents where one inmate physically assaults

another inmate or inmates. The district attorney said nobody - including staff or administration of the jail - was being investigated by his office.

There was no immediate word on whether the alleged sexual assault was also contained on the tapes, which were derived from a surveillance system at the jail.

However, both Pavlock and Prison Board Chairman and Commissioner Joe DeMott told The Era on Feb. 8 that no staff were involved in the altercations on the tapes.

When reached at home for comment on the alleged sexual assault, Pavlock declined to comment further on the case, noting it was still an active case.

DeMott declined to comment further on the matter when reached for comment Tuesday night.

Meanwhile, a call to the jail was referred to DeMott.

Court documents indicate the inmate was booked into the prison on Sept. 5, 2007. She had previously been charged with burglary and theft by unlawful taking.

Commissioner Judy Church declined further comment when reached at home Tuesday night. Meanwhile, a call seeking comment from Commissioner Al Pingie was not immediately returned as of press time.