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Ex-Harrison sheriff pleads guilty to six charges, will avoid jail time

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The Courier-Journal

Written by Grace Schneider

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Former Harrison County Sheriff Mike Deatrick pleaded guilty Monday to two felonies and four misdemeanors in a deal that allows him to avoid jail time and serve 1½ years of home incarceration and probation.

Deatrick, 66, looked pale and slightly unsteady as he left the courtroom arm in arm with his wife and daughter after admitting under oath that he had touched the breasts of two women dispatchers and had tried to intimidate them after they reported the allegations.

He also admitted his role in destroying videotapes to cover up evidence of the intimidation.

Although the ex-sheriff didn't comment, his lawyer, Bart Betteau, said Deatrick was relieved to put the criminal case behind him and felt remorseful about the turmoil he caused in the community.

Betteau also asserted that he advised Deatrick not to give in when county leaders and others pressured him to resign from office after the allegations surfaced.

"It's a very tough day for Mike," Betteau said of Deatrick's emotional state in pleading guilty to the six charges.

As part of the plea agreement, six felony charges against Deatrick were dismissed.

The two women whose claims launched the criminal investigation three years ago, Deana Decker and Melissa Graham, testified briefly during the 30-minute hearing in Clark Superior Court, saying

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they were satisfied with the plea deal.

Both said at a news conference later in the day that, although their lives have been “a total nightmare” since they first accused Deatruck of the misconduct, they felt vindicated watching as he publicly acknowledged it.

“He admitted what he did to us,” said Decker, who still works as a Harrison County dispatcher. “He needed to admit it. That was a big thing for us.”

Deatruck served two four-year terms and wasn’t eligible under Indiana law to seek a third when he left office last December. But his final years at the helm of a 60-employee police force and jail are certain to be remembered as one of most tumultuous periods of any political leader in Southern Indiana.

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