

*December 11, 2012*

Search

Article search...

Go

No jail time for former officer



Former Princeton Police officer Christopher Winkler, 27, of Princeton was sentenced this morning to five years probation with an additional six months of home confinement on a solicitation of bribery charge. Winkler, right, is shown here with his attorney William Flanigan. Staff photo by Eric DiNovo

(<http://bdtonline.com/local/x1332353474/No-jail-time-for-former-officer>)

By **JAMIE PARSELL**
Bluefield Daily Telegraph (<http://bdtonline.com>)

PRINCETON — A former Princeton police officer will spend five years on probation with an additional six months on home confinement for his actions against a juvenile in 2011.

Christopher Winkler, 27, of Princeton, was sentenced on a bribery charge Monday in Mercer County Circuit Court by Judge William Sadler. Winkler pleaded guilty to the charge in October. The state dismissed the charge of sexual abuse by a custodian or guardian in a previous plea agreement.

Sadler said the court struggled with Winkler's sentencing.

"I am sympathetic to the injuries the victim has faced," Sadler said. "It has been a life-altering event. There is little I can do or the court system to help fill the void in his life."

The victim's mother, Lisa Holcomb, addressed the court, asking for the maximum sentence, one to 10 years in prison. Winkler also addressed the court, as well as his attorney William Flanigan.

At the sentencing, Sadler said Winkler's case had received a lot of publicity.

The charges were filed after an incident that occurred on March 1, 2011, in a parking lot near the intersection of Route 20 and Route 104 in the Princeton city limits. A criminal complaint filed by the West Virginia State Police said Winkler, a Princeton police officer at the time, attempted to negotiate

West Virginia State Police said Winkler, a Harrison police officer at the time, attempted to negotiate sexual favors from a 17-year-old male subject.

Winkler was suspended from the police department a day after the incident and resigned soon afterward.

Between 2010 and 2011, Winkler also gave the male juvenile a debit card and then requested the juvenile perform dog walking and personal massage services to pay off the \$2,300 debt on the debit card. Winkler threatened to prosecute the juvenile and report the juvenile's mother to the state Child Protective Service if the debt was not paid. The juvenile went to the West Virginia State Police.

During the conversation regarding sexual favors as a way to pay off the debt, the juvenile wore a microphone.

In an earlier story, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney George Sitler said Winkler "did not cast aside the suggestion."

At the sentencing, Flanigan said Winkler had acknowledged his actions were not appropriate of a police officer and resigned. He also said Winkler could follow probation and eventually contribute to society. Probation would also allow him to receive medical treatment in Lewisburg.

Sadler said Winkler must follow probation or risk jail time.

He will not be able to serve in law enforcement again. The judge also said Winkler did not have a previous criminal record and there was only a conversation about sexual favors, not an act.

All of the factors — loss of profession, the public shame and a strict probation, are part of the punishment, he said.

"We, who are involved in law enforcement, forget to realize the impact on defendants like Mr. Winkler," Sadler said. "He has a college degree that is useless and he will be unable to participate in his chosen profession," he said.

The judge said Winkler will spend the rest of his days living with the shame.

Outside the courtroom, Holcomb, the victim's mother, said she was disappointed in the judge's decision.

"It is a disgrace for the community," she said. "He should have to go to jail ... home confinement is not going to teach him a lesson."

Holcomb said she and her son had to leave the state and have lost many friends and family members over the incident.

"My son is depressed, sick and can't keep a job," Holcomb said. "It has ruined his life."

— Contact Jamie Parsell at jparsell@bdtonline.com.