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Former Windermere Chief Daniel Saylor takes plea deal, could face 20 years in prison | Video

Saylor: 'I used to stand for what's right, and I know I've made a mistake.'

September 23, 2011 | By Jeff Weiner, Orlando Sentinel

Daniel Saylor accepted a plea deal Friday that could land him in prison for 20 years, but the former Windermere police chief's attorneys argued that he shouldn't serve any time behind bars.

Attorneys Mark NeJame and Rajan Joshi called character witnesses and put Saylor on the stand, hoping to convince Judge C. Jeffery Arnold to sentence Saylor to probation and community service.



Daniel Saylor, former Windermere Police Chief, speaks to the... (Jacob Langston, Orlando...)

Three factors they hoped Arnold would consider, before sentencing Saylor on Oct. 14: Saylor is a first-time offender, he's a single father and, NeJame said, he has suffered for his crimes.

"It is a tremendous penalty and price he's already paid," NeJame said. "He's not going to offend again."

More than an hour of testimony and argument followed the plea agreement: The state dropped charges of bribery and unlawful compensation for official behavior, the two most serious Saylor faced. He entered a plea of no contest to two counts of official misconduct, solicitation to commit official misconduct and solicitation to tamper with evidence. Saylor will also lose his law enforcement certification in the plea deal.

After the deal was hammered out and accepted by the judge, several friends and family members testified, describing Saylor, 44, as a humbled man who had been too generous for his own good.

Also called was Saylor's daughter, Nicole. Family and a psychiatrist testified that the father and daughter, who according to testimony is 11 or 12 years old, are close.

On the stand, the girl said she was afraid to be without her father. Asked to describe their relationship, she said, "It's great; I love him." Saylor watched the testimony intently but remained stoic.

Saylor was last to take the stand and told the court that his actions embarrassed his family, ruined his career and put his daughter in jeopardy. "I've risked losing her," he said.

After NeJame touted highlights of Saylor's career and accomplishments, the disgraced former chief asked the court for mercy in his sentencing

"I used to stand for what's right, and I know I've made a mistake," Saylor said.

Saylor was arrested and fired after a Florida Department of Law Enforcement investigation accused him of halting a child-sex investigation into a friend and urged one of his officers to destroy records.

The friend, Scott Bush, was arrested Jan. 12. Bush, 50, is charged with lewd or lascivious molestation and two counts of sexual battery on a child younger than 12 and is awaiting trial.

The judge said that he needs time to review documents from both sides, including letters from other of Saylor's friends and family. He expects to hand down a sentence at the hearing next month.

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