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Former deputy sentenced in misconduct case

Bowman guilty of misconduct after girl accused him of abuse

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By Danielle E. Gaines
News-Post Staff

Former Frederick County sheriff's deputy Sam Allen Bowman maintained his innocence at a sentencing hearing Thursday, while a special prosecutor said she never doubted the story of the girl who accused him of an inappropriate relationship.

The girl's family and special prosecutor Donna Fenton, who was brought in from Montgomery County to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest, thought the case would be hard to prove in a trial that would be emotionally difficult, so they decided to move forward with a plea agreement in October.

That agreement included a suspended 18-month jail sentence, which means Bowman could face 18 months in jail if he violates any terms of a two-year unsupervised probation sentence.

Bowman pleaded guilty to misconduct in office, effectively ending his law enforcement career.

Bowman, 47, of New Market, had previously retired as a corporal after 22 years with the Frederick Police Department. He was suspended without pay from the sheriff's office after the charges were filed, and he was later fired.

Bowman said he has struggled since the allegations were made and has lost the respect he built during his 23-year career.

"The shadow (of the allegations) will always remain attached to me," he said Thursday.

Bowman had been set to go on trial this month on three charges of fourth-degree sex offense and one charge of sex abuse of a minor. Those charges were dropped after he pleaded guilty to misconduct.

Bowman was a school resource officer at Walkersville High School, where he met the girl he was charged with abusing, according to court documents. He was accused of having sexual contact with the girl that began in his cruiser and moved to her bedroom after he took her home on March 9, 2011.

Bowman told investigators he went into the girl's house but said he was looking for evidence that she had been inhaling paint fumes, the documents state.

His cruiser's GPS system showed that he was at the house for more than an hour, Fenton said.

Bowman did not acknowledge any sexual contact with the teen as part of the plea agreement.

Instead, the agreed-upon facts were that Bowman violated rules by transporting the girl without reporting it through the proper channels, entered her home and her bedroom without reporting and failed to tell the proper authorities about suspected ongoing drug abuse by the girl after no evidence was found at the home, Fenton said.

On Thursday, Bowman described the school resource officer position as challenging

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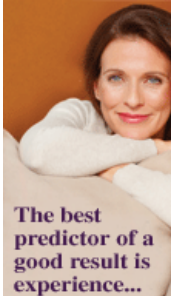
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On Thursday, Bowman described the school resource officer position as challenging.

His duties included befriending and protecting children at the school, counseling them and giving them rides to work or home. He said that he became "lax" in following procedures but did not assault the girl.--

Four rows of supporters filled the courtroom benches behind Bowman as he addressed Judge G. Edward Dwyer Jr.

His wife, Michele Bowman, said her husband of seven years is "the kindest person I've ever met."

She described his acts of generosity, such as buying and building bikes and toys for struggling families at Christmas, or ordering a hot meal for a family that had no electricity during the holidays.

She said those stories reflect Bowman's character, not the allegations.

The girl's father said he and his family had great respect for and trust the police officers, firefighters and others who protect public safety.

Unfortunately, Bowman violated the family's and community's trust and caused serious and lasting hurt for his family, he said.

"You not only broke a trust, you broke an oath," he said.

Misconduct in office is a misdemeanor, common-law offense in Maryland with no statutory maximum sentence. Sentences of more than 20 years have been approved in misconduct cases, Dwyer said at the plea hearing.

Bowman's attorneys have said they will consider filing a modification request that will ask the judge to consider giving Bowman probation before judgment, which would allow his criminal record to be expunged.

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