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News

NEW: VIDEO: Former cop gets 71 months behind bars for sex assault

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JRC News Service

FERNDAL - An assistant prosecutor called Thomas Cupples “a man of great evil” before the former Ferndale police officer convicted of molesting a girl was sentenced Thursday to a minimum of 71 months in prison.

Cupples, of Oxford, did not make a statement when given an opportunity to speak in the tense and crowded courtroom. Through his attorney, he has denied any wrongdoing.

Cupples was accused of sexually assaulting the girl on different occasions, starting when she was 11 years old through the age of 13. Charged with two counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, he was convicted earlier this month of two counts of the lesser offense of second-degree criminal sexual conduct.



In Oakland Circuit Chief Judge Nanci Grant's courtroom, Assistant Prosecutor Jason Pernick had harsh words for Cupples, noting his background in law enforcement.

“The defendant has committed the gravest of crimes, legally and morally,” Pernick said. “Behind that mask of normalcy lies a monster.”

Pernick asked the judge to depart upward from Cupples' minimum sentencing guidelines, which ranged from 36 to 71 months behind bars.

behind bars.

He cited several reasons, including that the guidelines do not take into account the impact Cupples' actions have had on the girl's family.

Defense attorney Elias Muawad said there were no substantial or compelling reasons to depart from the guidelines. He asked the judge to take into consideration the positive aspects of Cupples' life.

During the trial, Muawad argued that there were numerous inconsistencies in the girl's testimony and the testimony of other prosecution witnesses.

He said that the two cookies for pornographic websites found on Cupples' computer came from an infected disc that Cupples had downloaded after he was asked to investigate potential pornography viewing by a municipal employee.

Prosecutors said the girl's testimony was supported by other evidence, including DNA evidence that was found linking Cupples with the scene of the alleged assaults.

The victim's mother told the judge during the sentencing hearing that Cupples' actions will impact her daughter for the rest of her life.

"He assaulted her mind, body, soul, without remorse," she said.

Grant told the girl that she found her to be eloquent and intelligent.

"You are not a victim in any sense of the word," the judge said. "You have survived something, and that just makes you a stronger person."

Grant sentenced Cupples to 71 months to 15 years behind bars. She also ordered him to have no contact with the victim and wear a tether for the rest of his life once he's released from prison.

The courtroom was packed with supporters of the girl and supporters of Cupples, who sat on opposite sides.

People could be seen shooting dirty looks and heard quietly making negative comments. One of Cupples' supporters called someone white trash at the conclusion of the hearing, and deputies kept both sides separated in the hallway afterward.

Muawad said in the hallway that he would have preferred to see Cupples get a sentence that started at the low end of his sentencing guidelines, but was happy that the judge did not depart upward from them.

He said Cupples maintains his innocence and plans to appeal on evidentiary issues.

"He denies any liability in this incident," Muawad said.

According to reports, Cupples spent years at the Ferndale Police Department before leaving in 2005. He was hired in 2007 by Orion Township to serve as a code enforcement officer.

A township official said he was terminated in September after failing to attend work or contact the township about his employment.

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