

Ex-Old Forge cop pleads guilty to abusing teenager

By Joseph Kohut (Staff Writer)

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Jamie Krenitsky faced at least 15 years in prison if convicted on all felony charges for his role in the sexual abuse of a 15-year-old girl.

After pleading guilty to a misdemeanor on Thursday, he will serve a maximum of two years, possibly on house arrest.

A former Old Forge police captain, Krenitsky pleaded guilty to misdemeanor indecent assault before Lackawanna County Judge Vito P. Geroulo, ending his prosecution in a sex scandal that rocked the borough.

A noticeably thinner Krenitsky nodded when asked by Geroulo if he had oral sex with the girl between January and June 2005. Asked about the gap between the minimum sentence Krenitsky faced and the maximum allowed under the plea agreement, prosecutors expressed satisfaction.

"I think that the plea today is a testament to the consistency to the evidence we've collected," said Assistant District Attorney Mariclare Hayes. "Mr. Krenitsky stood before the judge and he took responsibility for doing exactly what it is that the victim accused him of. So I think, while the defense fought the fight, it is awfully difficult to escape the truth."

The maximum penalty for the charge is two years imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine. Deputy District Attorney Jennifer McCambridge said the sentence's length and location will be left to the discretion of the judge. She acknowledged that though part of the sentence may be served under house arrest, that does not mean prison time won't be part of the sentence.

"We've made no agreement in terms of sentencing," McCambridge said. "We're leaving that up to the judge."

As part of his plea, Krenitsky is required to register as a sex offender for the next 15 years and update his information on an annual basis. Krenitsky has also agreed to cooperate with the state to bring all "outstanding matters before the Commonwealth" to a resolution.

Prosecutors would not say whether the plea agreement specifically includes Krenitsky agreeing to testify against his former boss, suspended borough Police Chief Larry Semenza, who goes to trial in October on charges he sexually assaulted the same 15-year-old girl.

"Mr. Krenitsky has agreed to cooperate with the Commonwealth in whatever context he may be needed going forward," Hayes said. "That's all I can say at this time."

Jason Mattioli, Krenitsky's attorney, said he "absolutely cannot comment about anything" until the "other matter" is over.

The victim's attorney, Matthew Slocum, declined comment.

Semenza's attorney, Peter Paul Olszewski Jr., did not return a phone message Thursday afternoon.

Old Forge Mayor Michele Avvisato, Borough Manager MaryLynn Bartoletti and Council President Brian Rinaldi did not return calls Thursday.

Krenitsky, 35, was charged in May 2012 with felony involuntary deviate sexual intercourse with a person under 16 years old, felony contact or communication with a minor-sexual offenses, misdemeanor corruption of minors and misdemeanor indecent assault. The guilty plea agreement drops the felony charges, which shaves years from a sentence that could have been imposed if he chose to stand trial and was convicted at trial.

"I think what's important for today's charge is that the conduct that he pled to has never changed," Hayes said. "It is the conduct that was alleged from the very beginning."

The charges were filed after a former Old Forge junior firefighter came forward to state police and the Lackawanna County District Attorney's Office on May 2, 2012 with allegations she was sexually assaulted by Krenitsky and former borough firefighter Walter Chiavacci in 2004 and 2005, when she was 15.

For nearly half a year in 2005, Krenitsky and the girl, now 24, would perform oral sex on each other in a bunk room at the borough fire department. The Citizens' Voice does not identify victims of sexual abuse.

Semenza is slated to stand trial Oct. 15. Chiavacci, 47, pleaded guilty to indecent assault in December in exchange for his willingness to testify against Semenza and then co-defendant, Krenitsky.

Chiavacci is awaiting sentencing. Krenitsky resigned from the police force one week ago.

Hayes said she hopes Krenitsky's admission of guilt is a comfort to the victim.

"I hope that today could be a day that starts some healing for her," she said.

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