

Ex-Rindge cop plans to plead guilty

By Danielle Rivard Sentinel Staff

| **Posted: Tuesday, February 5, 2013 12:00 pm**

A former Rindge police officer accused of sexually assaulting a teenager is slated to plead guilty to lesser charges on Friday.

John Vargas-Cifrino, 35, of Harrisville is charged with a felony count of attempted aggravated felonious sexual assault and two counts of misdemeanor sexual assault.

Vargas-Cifrino, who was a part-time Rindge police officer at the time of the alleged incidents, engaged in sex acts with a girl he knew between the age of 13 and 16 in May 2012, according to court documents.

One night, Vargas-Cifrino entered the girl's room and touched her breasts and genitalia, according to an affidavit prepared by Keene police Detective Jennifer M. Ramey.

The girl, who was pretending to sleep at the time, then rolled over away from Vargas-Cifrino before she asked him to leave the room, which he did, according to the affidavit.

When the girl's mother learned about the alleged incident, she agreed to meet with Vargas-Cifrino in July while he was on duty. During the meeting, he told the girl's mother that he had touched her daughter and repeatedly apologized for what he had done, Ramey wrote.

The criminal investigation began when a priest whom Vargas-Cifrino had confided in shared information with the Rindge Police Department. When Vargas-Cifrino learned of an internal investigation, he resigned from the department after having worked there for 11 years, Rindge Police Chief Frank C. Morrill said in August.

He also worked as an aide for students with behavior problems at Conval Regional High School in Peterborough. He was placed on unpaid administrative leave once district officials learned of the allegations, Superintendent Richard A. Bergeron told The Sentinel in August.

Vargas-Cifrino's lawyer, Adam K. Cook, said after Vargas-Cifrino's probable cause hearing in August that he planned to plead not guilty.

But last month, Vargas-Cifrino signed a notice of intent to plead guilty in Cheshire County Superior Court, according to court records. The form indicates that he plans to plead guilty to two misdemeanor counts of sexual assault. Court documents show that the felony charge will be dropped by prosecutors in the plea deal.

In the non-negotiated capped plea deal, which means the prosecution and defense do not agree on a

sentence, prosecutors will ask the judge to sentence Vargas-Cifrino to a year in jail for the first charge and on the second charge, a year in jail, which would be suspended for three years. The sentence would also include a sex offender evaluation, two years probation and no contact with the victim and her family, according to court records.

The hearing is scheduled for Friday in Cheshire County Superior Court.