



Former Pittsburgh schools police officer faces sex charges

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By Sadie Gurman / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A Pittsburgh Public Schools police officer has been charged with nearly two dozen counts of sex crimes stemming from a Pittsburgh police investigation into former students' accusations that he sexually assaulted them.

Robert Lellock, 43, of Beltzhoover, was arrested today at a friend's home on Orange Avenue where he had been staying, police Lt. Kevin Kraus said.

He is being questioned at Pittsburgh police headquarters and will be taken to the Allegheny County Jail to face 23 counts of crimes including corruption of minors, child endangerment and sex crimes, the lieutenant said.

Mr. Lellock, a 22-year-veteran, was suspended with pay on July 25 after a former student claimed that he sexually assaulted him in 1999 in a closet at Arthur Rooney Middle School on the North Side. An affidavit of probable cause has been temporarily sealed, but charges filed against Mr. Lellock involve four victims, police said. At least some of the charges stem from an incident in 1998.

The school board tonight voted 7-1 to accept his resignation. Board member Mark Brentley Sr. voted no; member Sharene Shealey was absent.

Major Crimes Lt. Kevin Kraus said Mr. Lellock surrendered calmly this afternoon and refused to answer any questions, instead requesting to speak to an attorney. Detectives had interviewed him before his arrest.

"I think it's safe to say that he was preparing for criminal charges," the lieutenant said.

Lt. Kraus said the investigation remains ongoing and that the charges were "troubling" to police officers and parents alike.

He said the county Office of Children, Youth and Families is handling matters pertaining to Mr. Lellock and his foster children.

Mr. Lellock and his same-sex domestic partner also had custody of three children, the oldest of whom is a 7-year-old-boy. The couple had adopted the younger children.

Lowell E. Burkett, who is representing the older boy's biological father, filed a motion earlier this month asking a judge to remove the boy from Mr. Lellock's home. Mr. Burkett would not comment on the outcome of a Sept. 10 hearing on that matter.

He said that the county's office of Children Youth and Families launched an investigation into the living situation and made a safety plan that barred Mr. Lellock from sleeping at the home but allowed him to visit his children for four hours daily.

"The fact that he has now been charged hopefully will cause the court and CYF to reevaluate the situation," Mr. Burkett said.

He said city police are currently coordinating with the Allegheny County district attorney's office to determine who should investigate whether the district properly handled any complaints relating to Mr. Lellock.

Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen A. Zappala Jr. said last month that his office would investigate how much information the school district knew about the accusations and what officials did to address them.

Mr. Lellock was suspended for 20 days in 1999 following an internal investigation into the incident. Mr. Zappala has said he should have been fired at that time.

One of the victims said he enrolled at Rooney when he was 12 or 13 in 1998 and encountered Mr. Lellock when he was touring the school. The officer, in uniform, approached him and offered to give him a tour of the school. Mr. Lellock noticed a stain on the boy's pants and made a comment about it, then grabbed the student's pants pocket with his hand. The boy told the officer he had a stolen credit card in his pocket, and Mr. Lellock told him he could go to jail and that he could arrest him, according to a criminal complaint.

The boy told police that as the tour continued, Mr. Lellock grabbed the student's crotch and told him "not to tell anyone about getting caught with the stolen credit card or he could get into trouble."

The victim left the school that day, and didn't see Mr. Lellock until the start of the year.

He was only in school about a week when Mr. Lellock interrupted a class he was attending and told his teacher he needed to see him. The boy told police Mr. Lellock took him into a janitor's closet and reminded him about the stolen credit card before he pinched him through his clothes and asked the boy sexual questions.

The sexual abuse escalated after the first incident and the victim said that in at least 20 occasions, Mr. Lellock would take him into the third floor room and sexually assault him and force him to perform sex acts.

The victim told police that during the abuse, Mr. Lellock would always "whisper in his ear that if he ever told anyone he would kill him and his family," the complaint says.

Embarrassed, he brought a knife to school until finally he was expelled. After he was expelled, the officer again attacked, the victim said.

In another case that occurred in 1999, another victim, who was 13 or 14, said that Mr. Lellock would let him cut school and smoke marijuana. He would pull the boy from class, telling his teacher he had been caught with drugs and then take him to a janitor room, where he would aggressively push him up against a wall with his body, the complaint says.

The victim said the incident bothered him but he was always afraid to report it because he had been caught with marijuana more than once.

A third victim, who was in eighth grade, said he came in contact with Mr. Lellock when he got into trouble and was placed in the alternative classroom. Mr. Lellock would come into the classroom and "play buddy-buddy" with his teacher. He would walk around the grounds with the student when he caught him skipping class, once taking him into an isolated hallway, where he began to "play wrestle" with him.

He then handcuffed the student and touched his genitals with the back of his hand, according to the complaint.

The fourth victim also came in contact with the officer in the alternative classroom and said Mr. Lellock encouraged him to cut school.

The victim told police Mr. Lellock "never sexually assaulted him but would always attempt to entice him to meet with him outside school grounds." He would meet the boy and his friends and provide them marijuana, the complaint says.

Some charges stem from incident in 1998

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