

Former Minneapolis cop gets year in workhouse for sending nude pictures to 2 girls

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His wife sitting in the courtroom gallery behind him Friday, former Minneapolis police officer Bradley Schnickel read a short statement to the judge expressing his guilt and shame for sending nude photographs of himself to two teenage girls.

“The fact I robbed these girls of their innocence weighs heavily on me,” he said. “I’m disappointed in myself that I acted so inappropriately when I should have known better.”

Schnickel, 33, received a one-year sentence in the Hennepin County workhouse and six years’ probation as part of a plea agreement. He also faces multiple charges in Anoka County for allegedly using social media to try to lure girls into sexual encounters. Authorities say he had sex with two of them. His trial there is scheduled for February.

Schnickel’s attorney, Fred Bruno, said he has been in talks with the Anoka County attorney’s office to find a resolution “that’s right” for everybody involved, but that it will be a fight because of the number of alleged victims.

Schnickel, who was fired from the police force in February, now works in property management. He will be furloughed for work and treatment for what Bruno called his compulsive behavior. Schnickel volunteered to be in an intensive sexual treatment program that Bruno said he rarely recommends to his clients because it is so rigorous.

“It’s a hard-core program,” Bruno said. “You are watched 24-7.”

Schnickel will face a nearly three-year prison sentence if he violates his probation. He must register as a sex offender and can’t have unsupervised contact with minors. Anoka County Judge Jenny Walker Jasper, who handled the case because Schnickel was a police officer in Hennepin County, will allow him to have contact with his two daughters. She also ordered probation officers to place monitoring equipment on all of Schnickel’s computers or other devices that would give him Internet access.

His sentence was arranged in June when he pleaded guilty to two felony counts involving two girls under 16.

Arrested in February

Schnickel was initially arrested in February and accused of sending explicit online messages to four girls in Anoka County and having sex with one, a 14-year-old.

Further charges involving 14 other Anoka County girls were filed in May. Schnickel is accused of

having sex with one other girl, allowing another to perform oral sex on him and supplying or offering alcohol to several girls.

Court documents allege that he approached girls through Facebook and Skype conversations, identifying himself as “Brady Schmidt” and portraying himself as younger than he is.

Documents say that when he learned he was facing criminal charges in February, Schnickel told two girls to deny having had chats or contact with him. He allegedly told one girl he did not want to go to prison.

Before joining the Minneapolis Police Department in January 2008, Schnickel was with the police force in Glencoe, Minn., for 2½ years and with the Minneapolis Park Police from 2003 to 2005.

In October 2011, as a Minneapolis officer, he was recommended for a medal of commendation after he tackled an armed suspect in an alley, ignoring his personal safety, according to department records. Records also show that three complaints that were filed against him were closed with no disciplinary action.

Schnickel is the second former Minneapolis officer sentenced to jail this year. Sgt. David Clifford, 48, who also is no longer with the department, was sentenced in July to nearly four years in prison for assault. He was convicted for a punch that severely injured a man in an off-duty incident at an Andover bar last year.

After going over the details of her sentence, Walker Jasper told Schnickel that he had a lot of work to do and that he was fortunate to have the support of his family. She praised his progress in treatment but said he must be asking himself every day how got to this point in his life. She then wished him good luck.

In his statement, Schnickel said he deeply regretted his actions.

“I’ll continue to work on improving as a person, father, husband and member of society,” he said.