

Retired cop arrested on child porn charges

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PEABODY — A retired Peabody police officer has been charged with storing and sharing child pornography on his computer.

Joseph Ferrante, 60, of 30 Bresnahan St., Peabody, is scheduled to be arraigned this morning in Peabody District Court on charges stemming from an investigation by the state police Internet Crimes Against Children unit, according to court papers.

Ferrante was arrested at his home on Monday after troopers obtained a search warrant that allowed them to seize and examine Ferrante's computers. A preliminary search confirmed that among the items on the computer's hard drive was a video of two boys engaging in sexual activity.

That is the same video Sgt. Michael Hill found when he visited a file-sharing network in September.

The video, with the name "bibcam," (short for "boys in bedroom") depicted adolescent boys, 12 and 14, engaging in sexual acts. It was one of the videos listed on the file-sharing site as being available from a specific computer within the group.

Hill also found another video showing a boy under the age of 10 engaging in sexual activity with an older male. As the investigation continued, Hill was able to link directly to the same computer and found another video, this one described as a "preteen hard-core" video of an 8-year-old girl.

Using the IP address of the computer, prosecutors sought a subpoena from Comcast and learned the identity of the subscriber, Ferrante.

On Monday, they showed up at Ferrante's home with a search warrant.

Trooper James Dowling confronted Ferrante, who initially acknowledged only that he had "passed by" child porn.

Ferrante admitted to using the file-sharing service and admitted that he had both searched for and viewed child pornography. But he allegedly told investigators he did not believe there was child pornography on his computer.

A trooper who did a preliminary search found, in addition to the video of the two adolescent boys, files with names that suggested that they also contained child pornography. Police took the computer for a full search.

Ferrante, who is divorced, was released late Monday on \$5,000 bail set by an assistant clerk

magistrate following his arrest.

Ferrante is facing charges of possession and dissemination of child pornography. The possession charge carries up to a five-year prison term, but dissemination of child pornography carries a minimum mandatory 10-year term and up to 20 years in prison.

Courts reporter Julie Manganis can be reached at 978-338-2521, via email at jmanganis@salemnews.com or on Twitter [@SNJulieManganis](https://twitter.com/SNJulieManganis).