

Former OPD officer sentenced to 12 years in prison

By

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[2014 Cop Pedophile](#) Bennie Wilson

Bennie Wilson, a former Ocala Police Department officer who in October pleaded guilty to having sex with a teenager, was sentenced to 12 years in prison this week.

Circuit Judge Jonathan Ohlman handed down the sentence at the end of an hour-long hearing on Friday, in which Wilson and his family spoke in his defense. His attorney, Melanie Slaughter, pushed for leniency and asked Ohlman to consider sentencing Wilson to county jail rather than state prison.

Ohlman heard her argument, which emphasized mitigating factors such as the victim's willingness and Wilson's remorse. He also listened to Assistant State Attorney Bryon Aven's plea for a more severe sentence, based, in part, on Wilson's lengthy law enforcement career.

"Mr. Wilson should be held to a higher standard," Aven said, referencing Wilson's 19-year career as a law enforcement officer in Georgia and Florida.

The Ocala Police Department last year fired Wilson following his arrest.

As Ohlman announced his sentence, Wilson, dressed in a red-and-white striped uniform from the Marion County Jail, turned to face his family. In addition to 12 years in prison, he will serve three years of subsequent probation and must register as a sex offender.

Wilson pleaded guilty to one count of unlawful sexual activity with a minor and no-contest to another in mid-October, just minutes before a jury would have entered the courtroom to begin a trial. Because several hard-to-locate witnesses were already at the courthouse that day, Ohlman agreed to split Wilson's sentencing hearing between two days.

Aven's witnesses, including the victim and the woman who introduced the two, spoke in October. Their stories fleshed out details of Wilson's charges, which correspond to two sexual acts between him and a 16-year-old runaway while Wilson was on duty with the police department.

Slaughter's witnesses spoke at the second half of the sentencing on Friday afternoon. Wilson's father and nephew spoke to his good character, telling Ohlman that Wilson is a "good guy" and father of three who had become more religious since his arrest.

Wilson also spoke in his own defense, admitting that he made a poor decision. At one point, he turned around to apologize to the victim's mother.

"Your honor, I made a bad mistake," he told Ohlman. "The worst mistake of my life."

But when Slaughter prompted him to tell his own account of the 2014 incident that landed him in jail, he contradicted parts of the victim's testimony. She was in not court Friday.

While she had testified that it was clear from their introduction that she was underage, Wilson said he thought she was 18 years old. A mutual friend who had introduced the two had jokingly said, "Don't mess with her," Wilson admitted. But he said that woman did not, as she claimed in her own testimony in October, specifically say that the victim was underage.

The victim testified in October that she was having sex with as many as 20 men a day to support her drug habit at the time.

Wilson said he did know the victim was a prostitute, but did not know she was a runaway or had a drug addict, and said he would have gotten her help if he had known.

That, too, contradicted the victim's claim. She testified that Wilson, an acquaintance at that point, had approached her outside a junk yard and, after a conversation, agreed to pick her up for paid sex about a half-hour later. She said she told him she planned to use drugs in that time.

Wilson acknowledged that he drove the teen in his patrol car to a secluded parking lot, where she performed oral sex on him. He denied engaging in vaginal sex, however, as the victim had testified in October.

He said that corresponded to his no-contest plea; he wanted to avoid a jury trial.

He and Slaughter emphasized that the encounter was a one-time, spur-of-the-moment decision.

Referencing the testimonies from the October hearing that suggested otherwise, Wilson said, "I'm not the monster that the state tried to put me out to be."

Wilson began working for the Ocala Police Department in September 2012. He said in court he had previously worked for the Sumter County Sheriff's Office and for the Albany Police Department in Georgia.

He was arrested Oct. 31, 2014, after he admitted to sexual contact with the girl during an internal investigation. He bailed out of jail for \$10,000 the following day. He returned to the Marion County Jail this October, following his change of plea.

Contact Nicki Gorny at 352-867-4065, nicki.gorny@ocala.com or @Nicki_Gorny.