

Cottage Grove Police Officer Adam Pelton Charged With Sexually Harassing High School Students

MINNEAPOLIS (WCCO) – A Park High School resource officer is out of jail Tuesday night after he was charged for allegedly sexually harassing seven female high school students.

Adam Pelton, an officer with the Cottage Grove Police Department, was charged with three counts of criminal sexual conduct in the second degree and four counts of criminal sexual conduct in the fourth degree. The 40-year-old man allegedly inappropriately touched the seven students between Sep. 1, 2018 and Oct. 4, 2019.

According to the criminal complaint, the students claimed Pelton repeatedly hugged them and touched their buttocks over their clothing.

Most of these incidents occurred in Pelton's office: a private room within the school that did not have video surveillance. However, investigators later found video of Pelton initiating hugs with female students in school hallways.

The students reported Pelton would call them "beautiful" or "sweetheart." He also told one student he would date her, if he were her age. The same student then received Snapchat messages from him; in one of those messages, he made lunch plans with her for the summer.

Another student reported receiving three Snapchat messages in which he asked her to send nude photographs. The student never sent him any.

When he was questioned during the investigation, Pelton denied touching any student's buttocks. He initially denied asking for nude pictures, but later admitted he asked one student for nudes after she graduated, "as a joke."

Pelton has been on administrative leave since the investigation began in October of 2019.

At the time these alleged inappropriate sexual touching occurred, three of the students were between the ages of 13 and 15; four were 16 to 17 years old.

Pelton made his first court appearance on these charges Tuesday in Washington County District Court. His bail is set for \$150,000 without conditions. His next court appearance is set for March 2 in Stillwater.

If convicted, Pelton could face up to 115 years in prison.

On Tuesday, Cottage Grove Public Safety Director Pete Koerner [issued a statement in a Facebook video](#).

"The Cottage Grove Police Department is aware of the charges filed by prosecutors. As soon as allegations were brought forth, CGPD responded immediately with a preliminary investigation. Within 24 hours, the case was turned over to an outside agency to conduct an independent investigation. The Cottage Grove Police Department will be unable to comment on the case until it is resolved in the court system," Koerner said.

Park High School Principal Todd Herber also released the following statement:

Dear Park High School Families,

I am writing to let you know about a situation that affects our school

community.

Yesterday, the Dakota County Attorney's Office charged a former school resource officer with criminal conduct. Though the officer is employed by the City of Cottage Grove, I wanted to share this information because the officer served as our school resource officer from Sept. 2018 until Oct. 3, 2019.

I understand that this news is both surprising and upsetting. At Park High School, our first priority is the safety and wellbeing of the children you place in our care.

Due to privacy laws, I am unable to share any additional information. For further questions about the criminal charges, please contact the Cottage Grove Police Department. If you have any questions that you believe I can answer, please call me at 651-425-3700.

Thank you for supporting your child and Park High School.

Apple Valley Police Department is conducting the investigation to avoid conflict any conflict of interest with the Cottage Grove Police Department or Washington County Attorney's Office.