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BRIEFS:



Texas City Police Officer Guilty in Prostitution Sting

Former TCPD patrolman Christopher Marshall, was found guilty last month on charges of soliciting prostitution. The conviction ends Marshall's career as a peace officer.

Marshall, 35, approached a police informant and offered her money for oral sex nearly two years ago. Marshall had just gotten off work at the BP Refinery where he worked part-time as a security officer. He was promptly arrested by officers from his own department. Police Chief Robert Burby suspended Marshall immediately after the charge was filed. Marshall pleaded not guilty, and requested a jury trial. His defense was that he was trying to arrest the woman for prostitution, and that she had been the one soliciting. The jury rejected that theory, returning with a guilty verdict in less than a half hour. State law requires the revocation of any officer's license upon conviction of any crime more serious than a class C misdemeanor.

Investigators break up burglary ring

Major Eric Nevelow and Capt. B.J. Miller of the Galveston County Sheriff's Office reported last month the conclusion of an investigation into a burglary ring operating in Galveston County. The investigation resulted in the recovery of an estimated \$15,000.00 worth of stolen property and the arrest of three suspects on February 15th, 2008.



Douglas Wayne Hippe and Jack Cagney Ryan III both reside in Hitchcock, and have been charged with Felony Theft. Ryan's bond was set at \$100,000.00 and Hippe's bond was set at \$60,000.00. The charges on both of these individuals could be upgraded to Burglary of a Habitation (2nd degree felony) on numerous counts.

Marti Burrows Scates, pictured here, resides in LaMarque. She was charged with three counts of Felony Theft. Scates bonds were set at \$5,000.00 in each case.

Investigators confirmed Scates was purchasing stolen electronics and guns after an undercover officer sold Scates a stolen television and guns. She was immediately taken into custody. Additional stolen guns, computers and large screen plasma televisions were recovered at her home and place of business (Annie's R & E Lounge) on State Highway 3 in LaMarque, Texas.

Investigators with the Galveston County Auto Crimes Task Force, Santa Fe Police Department, La Marque Police Department and the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission assisted in the investigation.

Guest editorial regarding League City and Ethics Reform:

shady oaks and shady folks...

In the movie "Casablanca", one of the classic moments in cinema history occurs when Louie, the French Police Chief, under instructions from his NAZI bosses, decides to close down Rick's American Bar. "I am shocked to discover that gambling is going on here!" he tells Humphrey Bogart. "This place must be closed at once!" As he finishes speaking, an underling rushes up to him, clutching two handfuls of cash. He hands the money to Louie, saying "Your winnings, sir!" This is what is now happening at City Hall in League City. Mayor Jerry Shults and Council members Tad Nelson and Tommy Cones are spearheading an effort to reform the City's ethics.

Ahem. In light of the actions of these men, this seems to be as disingenuous a ploy as John Gotti forming a neighborhood watch committee.

Consider these facts: Mayor Jerry Shults accepted \$4,000 in contributions from developer Sam Boyd Sr. He then spent city money and resources in an attempt to help Boyd close down the gun range adjoining his property, hoping to acquire it at a low price. He also lied about it, claiming he was trying to help the gun range to comply, not close it down, then claiming it was a threat to public safety.

Shults, based on his shameless lies and concealments in this and other cases, is the last person I would want to "take the lead" in an ethics reform plan. He seems to have little or no experience in the matter.

Then there's City Council Member Tommy Cones. He's the one who apparently worked out a secret deal with developer Nick Scotto to transfer the Glen Cove bridge and the Genco Canal to Scotto's company. Before the public ever knew that Genco was donating the canal to the City, Cones met with Scotto and made the deal, which was then kept secret. The only significant contributor to Cones campaign was (surprise surprise)... Nick Scotto. Again, not the kind of guy you want to hear lecturing about ethics.

Then there's Tad Nelson. Back in October, he voted to replace the city's trash collection firm with Ameriwaste. Coincidentally, Ameriwaste's vice president was former City Manager Mike Clawson. Nelson and the other four council members who voted for the switch promised that no one knew ahead of time that the city would fire IESI and hire Ameriwaste. But they were wrong - Ameriwaste knew. That's why they ordered a bunch of dumpsters and hid them in Dickinson just before the switch was made. The city opted to spend about \$300,000 a year more to get Ameriwaste the contract. In the aftermath of this crooked deal, Galveston County DA Kurt Sistrunk decided to look into the matter. Tad Nelson has referred to the investigation as "nonsense", and said during meetings that he didn't have any confidence in the DA, and that the allegations were ridiculous. Not exactly what you'd expect from a watchdog on ethics. Less than a year ago, he was arrested on charges of assault and public intoxication.

So we have these tainted fellows calling out for ethical reform. All of them have reason to resign in disgrace and quietly leave town under a cloud of suspicion and distrust. All of them aided and abetted in the unethical and probably illegal transfer of city property without any public auction and no public hearings - which is against the law. They have been bankrolled by developers and contractors and then delivered the goodies to their benefactors. And they have the unmitigated audacity to "spearhead" ethics reform in League City, the town of "shady oaks, and shady folks" - at least when it comes to the shenanigans at City Hall.

There are elections coming up in May, and perhaps these guys are trying to clean up their tarnished reputations, just in case the voters start paying attention to what is really happening in their town. That's what former Councilman Tim Paulissen thinks. He characterized the call for ethics reform as akin to an insult, and said it's a politically motivated action.

In light of the Mayor's call for ethics reform and transparency, I think it would go a long way toward true reform if a few questions were answered by these three puritanical ethical giants of integrity:

Q: Why did the City secretly sell a lift station that belonged to the city to developer Nick Scotto without holding any hearings (as required by law) for less than the replacement cost of the lift station?

Q: Why did Tommy Cones wait two years before filing his campaign finance report (late) last month?

Q: Why did City Manager Chuck Pinto quit after less than a year on the job to take less money in Seabrook?

Q: Why has the city gone through 9 different City Managers in just 6 years time?

Q: Why did the City Council and Mayor fire City Attorney Arnold Polanco, then hire Dick Gregg - who then charged the city \$6,000 for work he did for developer Sam Boyd Sr.

Q: How did Ameriwaste know they were getting the trash hauling contract before the vote was held?

Q: Why did the city not accept the lowest qualified bid for the garbage contract, which is standard procedure?

Q: After a jury last month found the CEO of Ameriwaste had committed fraud and ordered her to pay \$400,000 in damages, why has the city not at the very least held meetings about replacing Ameriwaste with a company run by someone who a jury hasn't decided is guilty of forgery and fraud?

Now, before we have to hear any more of this talk about ethics from what might be the most ethically challenged group of political misfits since Boss Tweed ruled New York with fists of clay, why don't you ethical reformers try just once to provide a truthful and direct answer to these questions? I won't hold my breath...

(GATOR MILLER)



A charter-boat captain from Lake Charles, La., photographed this rare pink dolphin a couple of weeks ago in Calcasieu Lake, an estuary just north of the Gulf of Mexico in southwestern Louisiana. Capt. Erik Rue was on the lake with fishing customers when five dolphins came into view — four normal-looking gray ones, and a bright pink one that appeared to be an adolescent. Meanwhile, investigators are still trying to figure out what killed 20 dolphins who washed ashore near High Island last week. There have been at least 70 dolphins found dead on Galveston County beaches during the past month.

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