

Former police chief pleads not guilty

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SPRINGFIELD, Mass. (WWLP) - Former Lee Police Chief Joe Buffis pleaded not guilty at his arraignment in a Springfield courtroom Thursday on federal charges of money laundering and extortion.

He was released on \$100,000 unsecured bail and scheduled to return to federal court December 4th for a hearing.

Buffis was recently fired by the town and now, there's a search to replace him.

This all began in November of 2012, when the FBI conducted a raid on the Lee Police Department. Days later, Buffis got a lawyer.

On August 9, Buffis was suspended without pay, and on August 20, the town's Board of Selectmen voted to fire him. Buffis was let go, not because of the investigation, but because he allegedly charged the town with his family's cell phone plan.

Buffis was indicted on federal charges of extortion and money laundering for allegedly taking \$4,000 from a Lee couple and depositing the money into a toy fund account that he controlled. He allegedly then used that money for himself.

His lawyer told 22News that they will fight the charges.

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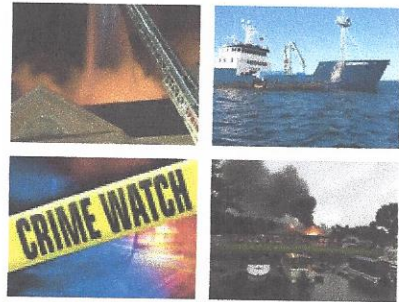
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