



Great Barrington, MA

AUGUST 10, 2013

50¢

LEE POLICE CHIEF INDICTED

Town is shocked, dismayed

Joseph Buffs has been under investigation since November 2012

By Julie Ruth

LEE — True to what must have been omeria, a collective pledge of silence, elected officials were conspicuously mum and invisible when the news of Chief Joseph Buffs' indictment broke.

In fact, no public official in this town would be caught dead uttering a comment, any comment, ever since FBI agents raided Buffs' office in Town Hall and his home in Pittsfield.

In marked contrast to how in Egremont officials immediately suspended their Police Chief, Reena Bucknell, when the rank-and-file police officers simply filed a no-confidence grievance against her, elected officials in Lee



Charged with extortion

By David Scribner

LEE — A federal grand jury in Springfield has indicted 55-year-old Police Chief Joseph Buffs on three counts of money laundering, and one of extortion stemming from a 2012 shakedown of the operators of a prostitution ring for \$4,000 and the use of the LaLiberte Toy Fund to transfer the extorted money to the personal accounts of Buffs and his wife.

The indictment was returned on Thursday, August 8.

Buffs will be arraigned in the United States District Court in Springfield at a date yet to be announced.

the Record also declined to comment on the news.

Most townspeople, too, did not want to comment. But those who did had reactions similar to that of Sandy Leprevost.

"I'm floored," she said. "Because he's a great guy. He's always lived in town, he's been on the police force a long time, and he's interacted with seems like everything that happens in town. My husband's on the traffic commission and has a lot to do with Joe. I feel really sorry. I can't imagine him doing something like that."

Leprevost agreed with the town officials' decision to keep Buffs on the force during the grand jury investigation rather than suspend him. "I think everyone was trying to give the benefit of the doubt," she said. "You're not guilty

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Lee Police Chief Joseph Buffs.



File Photo

By Tom Casey

LEE — The couple entangled in the indictment of Lee Police Chief Joseph Buffs now find themselves out of the frying pan and back into the fire... and \$4,000 poorer to boot.

According to District Attorney David Capeless, his office will seek to apply for complaints against

D.A. David Capeless.

inkeepers Tara Viola and Thomas Fusco relating to an alleged prostitution operation at the Inn at Laurel Lake.

"The inkeepers cooper-

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Chief Buffs' nine-page criminal indictment released to public

United States District Court District of Massachusetts
Crim. No. 13-30028 MAP
United States of America
v. Joseph Buffs, Defendant.

Violations:
18 U.S.C. 1951(a) — Extortion
By Wrongful Use of Fear and
Under Color of Official Right
(count one)
18 U.S.C. 1966 (a)(0)(B)(i) —
Money Laundering (Counts
two through four)
18 U.S.C. 981, 982 and 28
U.S.C. 2461 — Criminal
Forfeiture

INDICTMENT

The Grand Jury charges:
At all times relevant to this
indictment: Defendant Jo-
seph Buffs was the Chief
of Police of the Lee Police

Department, located in Lee,
Massachusetts.

On or about January 20,
2012, the LPD and the
Massachusetts State Police
("MSP") conducted an under-
cover operation at the Inn as
part of an investigation into
prostitution. While the LPD
and the MSP did not arrest
anyone on that date, Buffs
informed The Berkshire
Eagle that Citizen 1 and Ci-
tizen 2 had been arrested on
prostitution-related charges.
The Berkshire Eagle reported
the arrests later that night
and then published a simi-
lar article the following day,
which caused Citizen 1 and
Citizen 2 emotional distress
and resulted in lost business

for the Inn.
On or about January 20,
2012, a LPD Police Officer
submitted applications for
criminal complaints against
Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 to
the Clerk Magistrate of the
SBDC. The proposed com-
plaints charged Citizen 1 and
Citizen 2 each with Keeping
A House Of Prostitution and
Conspiracy and Citizen 1
additionally with Sexual Con-
duct For A Fee all in connec-
tion with alleged prostitution
activities at the Inn.

On or about February 21,
2012, Buffs appeared with
Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 at
the SBDC for a Magistrate
Hearing concerning the pro-
posed complaints. Prior to
the hearing, Buffs met alone
with Citizen 1 and Citizen 2
to discuss resolving the case
without any criminal charges
being filed. During this meet-
ing, Citizen 1 and Citizen 2
offered to donate \$1,000 to
a local dog rescue fund, but
Buffs insisted that Citizen 1
and Citizen 2 donate \$4,000 to
the Toy Fund. Citizen 1 and
Citizen 2 initially objected,
but ultimately agreed to do
so, in part because they feared
that otherwise Buffs would
advance the case by seeking
the complaints, thereby caus-
ing them further emotional
distress and financial harm.
Citizen 2 then wrote a \$4,000
check from his personal ac-
count payable to the Toy

Fund, with the memo line
"toy fund donation," and
presented the check to Buffs.
Citizen 2 asked Buffs to
hold on to the check because
his personal account did not
contain enough money to
fund the check. During this
meeting, Buffs also asked
Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 to ex-
ecute an agreement entitled
"Agreement Between Par-
ties / Accord & Satisfaction."
According to this document,
which Buffs drafted and also
executed, the parties agreed
that the Clerk Magistrate
found probable cause to issue
criminal complaints against
Citizen 1 and Citizen 2; none
of the parties would disclose
the outcome of the proceed-

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