

## CHRONOLOGY OF DOWNFALL

**1979**  
Hired as patrolman in the Lee Police Department.



**2011**  
Joseph Buffis is officially named Police Chief of Lee.



**JAN. 20, 2012**

Allee police officer submits applications for criminal complaints against the husband and wife owners of the inn to the Clerk Magistrate Thomas Barin of the Southern Berkshire District Court. The proposed complaints charged the couple with leading a house of prostitution and conspiracy as well as one with sexual conduct for a fee all in connection with alleged prostitution activities at the inn.

**FEB. 23, 2012**



According to court documents Buffis appears with the husband and wife to discuss resolving the case without any criminal charges being filed. During this meeting "Citizen 1 and Citizen 2" offer to donate \$1,000 to a local dog rescue, but Buffis insists that they donate \$4,000 to the Toy Fund. The couple at first object but later agree "because they feared that otherwise Buffis would advance the case by seeking the complaints, thereby causing them further emotional distress and financial harm". A \$4,000 check is written with the memo line "Toy Fund Donation".

**MAR. 2012**

Buffis allegedly transfers \$3,990 from the Toy Fund to the joint checking account.

**NOV. 19, 2012**



The FBI sweeps through the headquarters of the Lee Police Department and Buffis' Pittsfield home in the morning hours acting under a court order by the U.S. Attorney's office. The raid in Lee took between four and five hours. No arrests are made, and FBI officials decline to comment on the details of the investigation or whether the agency seized any property from the department.

**MAR. 2013**

The U.S. Attorney General's office investigates the Lee Police Department and requests articles regarding the drive between October, 2007 and January, 2012, from newspaper archives.

**1979**

Buffis begins supervising the La Liberte Toy Fund.



**JAN. 19, 2012**

Lee police and the Massachusetts State Police conduct a joint undercover operation, later reported to be at the Inn at Laurel Lake, as part of an investigation into prostitution. While no arrests were made on that date, Buffis reports that two individuals, Tara Viola and Thomas Fusco referred to as Citizen 1 and 2 in the indictment, had been arrested on prostitution-related charges.

**FEB. 21, 2012**

According to court documents Buffis appears with the husband and wife to discuss resolving the case without any criminal charges being filed. During this meeting "Citizen 1 and Citizen 2" offer to donate \$1,000 to a local dog rescue, but Buffis insists that they donate \$4,000 to the Toy Fund. The couple at first object but later agree "because they feared that otherwise Buffis would advance the case by seeking the complaints, thereby causing them further emotional distress and financial harm". A \$4,000 check is written with the memo line "Toy Fund Donation".

**FEB.-APR. 2012**

According to Buffis' indictment, he and/or his wife use the Toy Fund monies deposited into the Buffis joint checking account as a source of cash as well as to conduct transactions at local businesses and make payments on a credit card account in the name of Buffis' wife.

**MAR.-JUN. 2012**

Court documents state "in order to conceal further diversion of \$3,990 of the \$4,000 'donation' from the Toy Fund to the joint checking account Buffis made false statements to state police investigators concerning the disposition of the 'donation' which includes a claim that the Toy Fund has \$4,042 in his written statement.

**DEC. 2012**

Buffis suspends Toy Fund describing it as "reorganization". Residents are unable to make donations and toys are not distributed for the first time in the 53-year history of the drive. A grand jury is convened in Springfield to hear evidence in the case.



**AUG. 2013**

Chief Buffis is indicted by a grand jury and charged with money laundering and extortion by use of fear and under color of official rights.

# Chief Buffis charged in shakedown of alleged prostitution couple

*Continued from page E1*

If convicted, Buffis faces a maximum of 20 years in prison on each of the counts, followed by five years of supervised release, and a \$250,000 fine.

"To be entrusted to serve and protect is a great honor and privilege," stated U.S. Attorney General M. C. ...

had managed the toy fund, started by the late Lee Police Officer Edward J. Laliberte to provide toys to needy families in Lee, Lenox Dale and Tyringham. In 2011, Buffis was named police chief.

The indictment alleges that in February of 2012, Buffis extorted \$4,000 from "two individuals," promising to make the prostitution

ary of 2012, Tara Viola, 39, and her husband, Thomas Fusco, 47, owners of the Inn at Laurel Lake, had been charged with conspiring to promote prostitution at the Inn.

The accusations were the result of an undercover investigation by the Lee Police Department and the Berkshire County Drug Task

"had gotten taken care of." The federal indictment states that Buffis had also extracted a nondisclosure agreement with Viola and Fusco that they would not bring criminal or civil action against the town of Lee or its employees.

In November of last year agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation raided Buffis'

picion over Buffis - and the members of the Lee Police Department - the Board of Selectmen has so far declined to suspend Buffis. The next meeting of Lee Selectmen is August 20.

But Capeless insists that the members of the Lee Police Department should not be associated with the charges against their chief.

fund, to contact the FBI by calling (413) 732-0159. Capeless said that his office had turned the investigation over to federal investigators because "we thought it could be more properly handled in a federal jurisdiction with the statutes that they have."

The district attorney also pointed out that a priority of