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Bench warrant issued for Deadwood City Commissioner Blake Joseph

Pioneer staff reports
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Blake Joseph

DEADWOOD — Deadwood City Commissioner Blake Joseph failed to appear at his trial at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday in Deadwood.

Judge Chad Callahan issued a cash only bench warrant, for \$132.50, after waiting nearly 10 minutes for Joseph to arrive at the magistrate courthouse on Tantaka Drive.

“It is 1:39 p.m. and he is not present,” Judge Callahan said, after indicating that the court had checked in with the Lawrence County Courthouse to find out if Joseph arrived at the wrong venue. He had not checked in there either. Wednesday marked the first day of magistrate court at the new public safety center located on Deadwood Hill.

The attorney for the state of South Dakota, Jeffry Erlandson, and three witnesses — some of whom are firefighters — were present.

Joseph was charged with careless driving and traveling through a roadblock, after he allegedly struck a Deadwood firefighter with his vehicle while the firefighter was manning a roadblock during the Days of '76 Parade on July 27, 2024.

Joseph emailed the Pioneer in November, requesting an updated story stating that all charges against him, related to the alleged incident, had been dropped. They were not.

The traveling through the roadblock charge was eventually dismissed on May 13. The careless driving charge is a Class two misdemeanor punishable by up to 30 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

Joseph's trial has already been rescheduled twice. It was originally set for March 5, and continued upon Joseph's request to May 21, so that he could attend a celebration of life for songwriter and comedian Gordy Pratt. Pratt's celebration of life was actually scheduled for April 5.

The trial was continued a second time after Joseph's attorney, Greg Sperlich, withdrew as his representation on May 9.

Sperlich asked to be dismissed as Joseph's retained attorney “due to a breakdown in communication.”

The trial was then rescheduled to Wednesday, July 2nd. A new trial date has not yet been set.

This article has been updated to reflect a clarification in the dollar amount of the cash bond.

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