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Deadwood commissioner arrested on misdemeanor charge

By Mark Watson Black Hills Pioneer
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Blake Joseph (MUG)

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DEADWOOD — A Deadwood City Commissioner was arrested for the misdemeanor charge of traveling through a roadblock.

Commissioner Blake Joseph turned himself in to the Lawrence County Jail on a warrant Aug. 29. He was processed and released on a \$500 bond the same day.

According to court reports, shortly before noon on July 27, South Dakota Highway Patrol Trooper Ryan Needham was dispatched to a reported crash. Lawrence County Dispatch told Needham that a firefighter had been hit by a vehicle driven by a city commissioner at the intersection of Cemetery Street and Sherman Street. While responding to the scene, he was told that no one was at the location anymore.





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Needham then met John Beck-Bronikowski at the fire hall. In his written statement, Beck-Bronikowski said around 9:45 a.m., he was helping with traffic control/shutting down a road for the Days of '76 Parade at the intersection. He wrote that Sherman Street was shut down so traffic could only turn left, not right. He was wearing blue jeans, a blue shirt with his firefighter logos and wording, a hi-visibility vest, and a firefighter ball cap. He wrote that all he had was a cone and himself for traffic control.

He alleged a red Jeep approached the roadblock and was trying to make a right turn. Beck-Bronikowski wrote he directed the Jeep to turn left, but the driver continued to make a right turn and had stopped with the vehicle touching his leg. He wrote it was not an impact, had no injuries, and that he wasn't sure if Joseph even knew his bumper had touched his leg. He wrote that the driver made it evident he did not want to talk and was going to drive through the closed road. The driver then told him he was a "commissioner" and had "authority." Beck-Bronikowski alleged he then stepped back so he would not be hit or run over.

Needham ran the license plate and learned that it belonged to Blake Joseph, a Deadwood commissioner.

According to court reports, Needham called Joseph and said he was calling regarding an incident involving a firefighter and a road closure that morning.

Joseph allegedly said, he "knew what I was talking about," and that "he advised he knew the road was closed, but he was a participant in the parade and was going down to his location."

Needham wrote in his report that Joseph said there was no incident, and that he talked to a resource officer and another police officer about the situation.

Needham wrote in his report, "based on the evidence I deemed this to no longer be a crash."

The report was sent to the Lawrence County state's attorney.

Prosecuting Attorney Jeff Erlandson subsequently filed charges of traveling through a roadblock on Aug. 22. Traveling through a roadblock is a Class 1 misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail and a \$2,000 fine.

A warrant of arrest signed by Judge Chad Callahan was issued Aug. 26 and an amended one was issued by the judge Aug. 29. Bond was set at \$500.

Joseph's initial appearance is scheduled for Oct. 28.

Joseph told the Pioneer Wednesday that the incident was "a complaint that was called in by a fellow parade volunteer, and I also was a volunteer on that parade myself."

He added that he, "is confident there is little merit behind these accusations."

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