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Trial of Deadwood mayoral candidate pushed back till after election

By Mark Watson Black Hills Pioneer

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DEADWOOD — The trial of a Deadwood city commissioner, who is a candidate for the April mayoral election, has been delayed until May.

Blake Joseph turned himself in to the Lawrence County Jail on a warrant Aug. 29, 2024. The misdemeanor charges stem from a July 27, 2024 incident at the Days of '76 Parade in which Joseph allegedly struck a Deadwood firefighter who was manning a road block.

The firefighter alleged Joseph was trying to make a right turn at Cemetery and Sherman street. John Beck-Bronikowski reported he directed Joseph, driving a Jeep, to turn left, but the he continued to make a right turn and had stopped with the vehicle touching Beck-Bronikowski's 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 Joseph made it evident he did not want to talk and was going to drive through the closed road. Beck-Bronikowski alleged Joseph told him he was a "commissioner" and had "authority."

Highway Patrol Trooper Ryan Needham responded to the incident and 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 filed charges for 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. On Oct. 15, Erlandson added the charge of careless driving.

Joseph told the Pioneer following his arrest that he, “is confident there is little merit behind these accusations.”

Then on Nov. 4, 2024, Joseph reached out to the Pioneer requesting an updated story be published.

“Given the rapid reporting on the initial charges, it would be only fitting for the public record to reflect that these charges have since been dropped,” he wrote.

The charges have not been dropped.

A trial date was set in January for Wednesday.

On Feb. 28, Joseph’s attorney, Gregory J. Sperlich, requested a continuance of the trial.

Sperlich wrote in his motion that Joseph, “has a Celebration of Live (sic) he would very much like to attend.” That celebration for life was for Black Hills songwriter and comedian Gordy Pratt.

Pratt’s family confirmed with the Pioneer the celebration of life is scheduled for April 5.

The continuance was granted and the trial has been rescheduled for May 21 before Magistrate Judge Chad Callahan

The Deadwood mayoral election is scheduled for April 8. Joseph is challenging fellow commissioner Charlie Struble-Mook for the seat.

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