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Sheriff's office legal advisor fired

By Angye Morrison
NCR Editor

Wednesday, August 3, 2005 1:20 PM EDT

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SPECIAL SECTIONS

Legal advisor Gabrielle Taylor was fired by Nassau County Sheriff Tommy Seagraves last Thursday following her arrest at an Atlantic Beach bar.

Taylor, 39, had worked for the department for less than three months. She was charged with disorderly intoxication and public disturbance, trespassing and resisting an officer. The incident took place outside the Fly's Tie bar in Atlantic Beach. Taylor had moved to that area to stay with a friend while she looked for a place to live in Nassau County, Seagraves said.

According to incident reports by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, Taylor was intoxicated, and became agitated when she was asked to leave the bar. The owner of the bar called a cab for her, which she refused to get in. When she became belligerent, police were called to the scene.

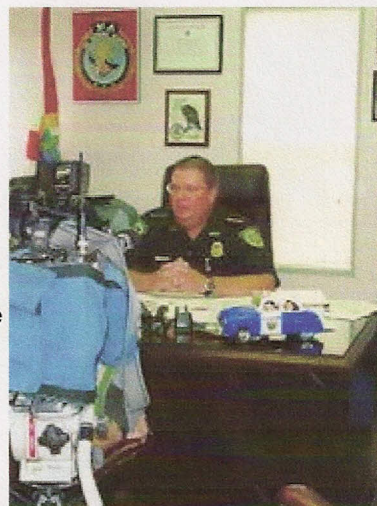
Upon arrival, Atlantic Beach police officers found Taylor shouting obscenities at the bar's owner - but she soon turned her anger toward the officers, calling them names and refusing to get into the cab. She eventually got into the cab, but immediately stepped back out of the vehicle, saying she "wasn't going anywhere."

Officers told Taylor that if she did not leave, she would be placed under arrest. When she continued to resist, the officers handcuffed her and placed her under arrest.

At that point, Taylor "became very angry and said she worked for the Nassau County Sheriff's Office, and demanded (for) us to leave her alone," the report stated.

When officers tried to place Taylor into their squad car, she "tensed up and said she was not getting in." She complied after officers warned her that they would use a taser on her if she didn't cooperate.

Once placed in the vehicle, Taylor began to yell and scream at the officer, saying that he was trying to kill her. While the officer attempted to finish his report, she



Nassau County Sheriff Tommy Seagraves interviews with television crews last week regarding the firing of Gabrielle Taylor.
Photo by Angye Morrison

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began to kick the window of the vehicle with both feet, and had to be placed in "hobble" restraints.

She was booked by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, and called Seagraves at 8:30 a.m. Thursday morning to let him know she wouldn't be in to work that day.

Seagraves said Taylor came to him highly recommended by Sarasota County Sheriff Bill Balkwill, and that the background check conducted prior to her hiring didn't produce anything that would have precluded her being offered the job.

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"We've had no problems since she came here," he said. "She did a lot to help steer the department in the right direction."

Seagraves added that Taylor had been working on the department's policies and procedures, union contract negotiations, civil internal investigations and pending lawsuits left over from the previous administration. Her annual salary was \$72,000.

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Seagraves said he received a call just after 2 a.m. last Thursday, informing him of the arrest. He added that Taylor had driven to the establishment in an unmarked NCSO vehicle, which she had been issued to drive to and from work, as well as while she was conducting business for the department.

BRYCEVILLE[Bryceville Info](#)[School Info](#)

He said he took quick and decisive action because of the department's zero tolerance policy, and the fact that she had driven to the establishment in the department's unmarked vehicle.

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"Do I allow them to drive to a bar? No," he said. "It was poor judgement on her part. It embarrassed the department and the county. I'm not going to tolerate this kind of behavior."

A letter of termination was delivered by NCSO deputies to Taylor Thursday afternoon while she was still in custody at the Duval County Jail.

Prior to coming to the NCSO, Taylor had worked for the Sarasota Sheriff's Office for more than three years. She has also worked as an attorney with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

This incident was not Taylor's first alcohol-related problem. According to reports, Taylor resigned from the Sarasota department in February following a similar incident at a Siesta Key bar, during which two deputies were called to take her home. Her last day at the department was April 20.

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She had also been disciplined for drinking before going on a 2002 ride-along with a deputy, and interfering with the deputy during a traffic stop.

Although he was aware there had been some issues with Taylor outside of the workplace, Seagraves said he wasn't alarmed. The recommendation from Balkwill, coupled with the clean background check, left him assured that she would do a good job for the department.

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"She was employed (in Sarasota) when she was hired here," he said. "Every one of her past employers had nothing but positive things to say about her and the job she did."

Seagraves added that he hasn't begun a search for Taylor's replacement yet, but plans to begin the search as soon as possible. He stands firm on his decision to fire Taylor, which he said was based on this incident, not the job she was doing for the department. "This was unfortunate. But I don't hold the keys to my officers' responsibility (in their personal lives)," Seagraves said. "But outside of that, when they are on the clock, it's in my hands."

Taylor has been released on her own recognizance, he added.

E-mail comments and suggestions to amorrison@nassaucountyrecord.com.

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