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Sheriff's top legal adviser resigns

By MIKE SAEWITZ
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SARASOTA COUNTY -- The sheriff's top legal adviser had a few drinks at a Siesta Key bar and caused enough of a disturbance that two deputies were called to take her home.

Gabrielle Taylor, 38, resigned two days later.

The deputies who took her home in the early morning hours of Jan. 30 did not write a report about the incident. She was put on administrative leave the next day by Sheriff Bill Balkwill.

Taylor had been disciplined once before in an incident related to alcohol.

She had been drinking before going on a 2002 ride-along with a deputy, and interfered when the deputy made a traffic stop, according to an internal affairs report. Investigators supported one count of conduct unbecoming and handed her a two-week suspension.

Sheriff's officials would not say exactly what caused a deputy working an off-duty detail at Gilligan's Bar & Grill to call two deputies to pick Taylor up on Jan. 30, a Sunday.

"There was something personal that was bothering her," said sheriff's Sgt. Chuck Lesaltato. "She became upset. She didn't have a car. They felt they should take her home."

Taylor said her resignation was not fueled by what happened at Gilligan's. "I have a lot of personal stuff going on right now," she said. "I need to do something different, that's all."

A former attorney at the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles, Taylor has been with the Sheriff's Office for more than three years.

Her job was to answer legal questions, and she also went to court to handle

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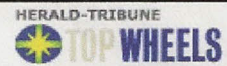
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forfeiture cases. She made about \$82,000 a year.

In her resignation letter, Taylor wrote that she enjoyed working with deputies "immensely," and that "the time is right to pursue other options."

"She's done a good job," Lesaltato said. "She came to the department with a lot of experience. She had a lot of background working with law enforcement."

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