



City of Spokane Media Release

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CITY ATTORNEY CONFIRMS DECISION NOT TO PROSECUTE BUNCH

Spokane City Attorney Howard Delaney today announced that the City will not re-file misdemeanor charges against former Sheriff's Office Sgt. Pete Bunch.

Following considerable public interest in the case, Delaney and two other attorneys in the City's Legal Department with extensive prosecutorial experience reviewed the Bunch case. Bunch was arrested by Spokane Police Department officers for obstruction and resisting arrest after being stopped by Police who were seeking a person who had been trespassing in residential yards.

"Based on the totality of circumstances as presented, Prosecutor Jim Bledsoe did not abuse his prosecutorial discretion," Delaney says. "Barring some future criminal conduct by Mr. Bunch, the City will not prosecute this case."

Delaney said he and the other reviewers on the case found some factual inconsistencies in the case that might well lead to plausible defense arguments dealing with "Terry stops" and weapons frisks. Essentially, the defense would likely argue that officers didn't have a clear right to stop Bunch or frisk him for a possible weapon. Regardless of a conviction at the trial level, an appeal based on these type legal issues would undoubtedly follow, Delaney said.

"The constitutional issues presented make these types of cases difficult to win cleanly, without the probability of a year or more of defense appeals," Delaney said. "Our Spartanly funded Prosecutors Office has a fixed amount of resources and must make tough decisions every day about where they will invest scarce prosecution assets. The City Prosecutor had no real option except to weigh the actual risk of re-offense against the time and expense associated with a jury trial and related appeal.

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Separately, Delaney discussed the statements made by Prosecutor Jim Bledsoe to Sheriff's Lt. Bill Rose.

“Upon reconsideration of the conversation, the Prosecutor acknowledged to me that part of his conversations with Lt. Rose certainly were interpreted differently than he intended,” Delaney said. “In the Rose conversation, Bledsoe believed he was attempting to express empathy for the tough situation the law enforcement agencies were experiencing, while at the same time relaying the difficulties of prosecuting Bunch for his actions, especially considering the accused’s long career in law enforcement, lack of a criminal record, and the limited prosecution resources available.”

In retrospect, the Prosecutor acknowledged the conversation failed to convey either the appropriate information, or tone, to Lt. Rose. Bledsoe took responsibility for the communication breakdown with Rose and regretted any implication that Rose had erred in his report, Delaney said.

“At the end of the day, I believe we have a misunderstanding fueled by a poor choice of communication style,” Delaney added.