

Corrections officer accused of sexual misconduct held on \$250,000 bail

By Paul Gottlieb

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John Russell Gray

PORT ANGELES — A corrections officer accused of paying the bail of female Forks jail inmates in return for sexual acts remained in the Clallam County jail Wednesday on \$250,000 bail.

First- and second-degree custodial sexual misconduct charges are expected to be filed at 1 p.m. Friday in Clallam County Superior Court against John Russell Gray, 51, of Forks.

Four former Forks jail inmates accused Gray, now a Clallam Bay Corrections Center officer, of sexually assaulting them when he worked at the Forks jail, according to the probable cause statement filed by the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, which investigated the case.

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Two inmates said he had sexual contact with them between July 1 and Sept. 4.

One said Gray had sexual intercourse with her in the jail clothing room, which was allegedly witnessed by an alleged victim who said she had given Gray oral sex out of fear he would hurt her.

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“Officer Gray later asked [the woman] to not wear a bra and come out of her cell wearing just a T-shirt,” according to the statement.

Another allegation by a woman who was incarcerated in the Mason County jail and transferred to the Forks jail by Gray was to be referred to the Mason County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office said Tuesday on Facebook.

Gray bailed the woman out of jail after molesting her on the ride to Forks, according to the probable cause statement.

Judge Lauren Erickson set bail at the amount requested by Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Steve Johnson for investigation of one charge of felony first-degree custodial sexual misconduct and two charges of misdemeanor custodial sexual misconduct.

She rejected a request by Seattle lawyer Aaron Kiviat, representing Gray, that Gray be released on his own recognizance.

Kiviat said Gray is a longtime Washington resident, has a wife and a family and is not a flight risk.

“I’m concerned with the possibility that he will interfere with the administration of justice based on the nature of the offense,” Erickson responded.

“We have allegations of not only sexual misconduct in the jail, but we have allegations of him bailing these women out in exchange for acts of a sexual nature.

“I have no confidence he wouldn’t seek to intimidate witnesses or otherwise interfere with justice.”

Gray was hired as a CBCC corrections officer in 1997, state Department of Corrections spokesperson Janelle Guthrie said.

He was working at the corrections center before he was hired in 2019 as a Forks jail corrections officer, City Planner-Attorney Rod Fleck said Tuesday.

Gray was let go late last year after eight or nine months during a standard one-year probationary period that all officers go through, Fleck said Wednesday.

Forks Police Chief Mike Rowley said Wednesday that Gray was let go after he made an inappropriate comment.

Rowley said the jail has cameras, but not all of them record data.

Cameras in the clothing room and library do not record data.

“We monitor some areas and record some others,” Rowley said.

Brian King, Clallam County Sheriff’s Office chief criminal deputy, said Rowley had requested that the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office investigate the case after Rowley received a letter from the son of one of the alleged victims in January who said Gray sexually assaulted her.

The woman was the same person who was arrested in Port Angeles late last year on an outstanding warrant who said she was afraid to be taken to the Forks jail because she feared Gray, King said.

King said Rowley was aware of an assault allegation against Gray when a detective contacted Rowley about the woman’s allegation.

Rowley, who would not comment on details of the case, said he requested help from the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office to avoid an appearance of a conflict of interest had he asked the Clallam County Sheriff’s Office to investigate Gray.

Gray, rehired by CBCC following his employment at the Forks jail, was arrested Tuesday morning inside the prison following his shift.

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