

The Craig Daily Press

Front page stories

Ex-bookkeeper faces felonies

By Joshua Roberts, Daily Press writer

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An investigation that began in August into the alleged embezzlement of missing money from Moffat County High School has translated into felony charges against a former bookkeeper.

On Wednesday, 14th Judicial District Attorney Bonnie Roesink filed three felony charges in Moffat County Court against Susan Lord, 38. Those felonies are: theft in a series between \$500 and \$15,000, embezzlement of public property, and forgery of a government-issued document.

The embezzlement charge covers the total amount of money believed missing at this point -- about \$57,000. It alleges that Lord "knowingly converted the public monies or property to her own use, or to a use other than the public use authorized by law."

According to Moffat County School District's employment records, Lord had worked for the district since 1999. Initially hired as a special education assistant, she moved to the bookkeeper position at the high school in 2001. She resigned from her post in August, the same day district officials and police announced an investigation had begun into missing funds.

The money came from the activities account, which is collected by high school officials.

The complaint, which summarizes the charges against Lord, indicates the alleged embezzlement occurred over four years, from August 2002 to August 2006.

The forgery charge stems from, prosecutors allege, Lord "unlawfully, feloniously and falsely" altering an activities account reconciliation report, which lists revenues, expenditures and ending balances, among other line items.

School district Superintendent Pete Bergmann said the district has been anticipating charges being filed against Lord, and that he's pleased to see the District Attorney's Office has kept its word by seeking an end to the trouble that sprung up in August.

"From our standpoint, we're glad to see that charges have been filed, and that this case is moving

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forward," he said.

While careful not to minimize the allegations, Bergmann said the missing money has relatively little impact on the overall operations budget of the district, about \$17.5 million.

"In the scheme of the total budget ... it is insignificant to the operation," he said. "It is not an insignificant amount of money. We are 100 percent confident that we will recover those funds."

The school district has filed a claim with its insurance company in hopes of recovering the missing money. Bergmann said a settlement most likely wouldn't be reached until the case is finalized and an agreement is reached on restitution.

In September, a month after the investigation started, the school district moved forward with a series of changes designed to prevent fraud and formalize standard operating procedures for the management of petty cash and student activity funds.

If convicted of all three felonies, Lord could face one to 12 years in prison. Sentencing is left to the discretion of the judge.

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