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Mayor of Adelanto arrested in theft of Little League funds

ASSOCIATED PRESS

6:18 p.m. April 10, 2007

ADELANTO – The mayor of this high desert town was arrested Tuesday along with his wife for allegedly stealing more than \$20,000 from Little League coffers over three years.

Jim Nehmens, 50, and Kelly Nehmens, 44, were taken into custody by investigators from the San Bernardino County district attorney's office and charged with three counts of grand theft by embezzlement. If convicted, they could each face up to nine years in prison.

They posted \$60,000 bail and were expected to be released late Tuesday. It wasn't immediately known if they had retained attorneys. A phone message left for Jim Nehmens at his city office was not immediately returned.

Prosecutors said they began investigating the couple in September after they received a complaint about possible missing funds from the Adelanto Little League account. In October, authorities served a search warrant at the Nehmenses' home and seized a number of documents and records.

Nehmens told the Victorville Daily Press at the time he was innocent and said he believes it was a “personal issue.”

Prosecutors believe between 2004 and 2006, the couple stole more than \$20,000 from Little League fundraisers, mostly from the annual fireworks sale. Other money stolen by the couple came from registration and the snack bar, said Deputy District Attorney John Goritz.

The couple has been involved with Little League since 1999. Jim Nehmens has served as Adelanto Little League president and his wife was a board member for the past eight years. They have two children, but Goritz didn't know whether the children had been involved with Little League.

At City Hall, employees were stunned to learn of the mayor's arrest.

“He's very principled and very ethical,” said City Manager James Hart. “I don't know what the DA's office found but it's very surprising to us here.”

Jim Nehmens, who works as an office manager for an electrical construction firm, was re-elected mayor last year. His term expires in 2010.

He was first elected to the City Council in 2000. The city of more than 24,000 switched to elective mayorship in 2004 and he served two years in that position before it was turned into a four-year post.

The city is about 85 miles northeast of Los Angeles. Its population has doubled over the past decade and is projected to grow to 120,000 by 2030.