

Dorion no longer in custody

Former Nez Perce County sheriff freed on his own recognizance, but must remain in the area

By Brad W. Gary of the Tribune

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Jim Dorion

Jim Dorion walked out of the Nez Perce County sheriff's office Thursday, 60 days after his arrest in northern Louisiana.

Magistrate Judge William Hamlett agreed to release the former Nez Perce County sheriff from custody following a brief court hearing Thursday in Moscow, and after Dorion agreed to waive his right to a preliminary hearing on three counts of felony accessory to burglary.

Deputy Attorney General Chris Topmiller and defense attorney Joseph P. Filicetti appeared in court via telephone from Boise Thursday. Dorion, 49, said little, but acknowledged his decision to forego the hearing.

Dorion had been held in Latah County Jail custody on \$25,000 bond since his return from Louisiana last week. He was released on his own recognizance, with Hamlett's condition he not be allowed outside the 2nd Judicial District except for medical appointments. The 2nd District comprises Clearwater, Idaho, Latah, Lewis and Nez Perce counties.

A criminal complaint filed by the Idaho Attorney General's office alleges Dorion withheld information from Lewiston police for a two-year period while he was sheriff, and aided Stephen Peak in evading capture from three previous alleged burglaries.

"We're evaluating the case; I know what their evidence is. We could have done a bond hearing, but I have a pretty good idea where the case is going right now," Filicetti said of why his client waived the hearing.

The waiver means Dorion will enter a plea in the case on Thursday in 2nd District Court in Lewiston. District Judge John Stegner is scheduled to preside over the case.

Requests to interview Dorion have been declined by his attorney. Filicetti said his client would not be discussing the case publicly until it is concluded.

Filicetti is representing Dorion through the Fraternal Order of Police, as part of a legal plan officers buy into as a member of the organization. Because he is facing allegations from his time as Nez Perce County sheriff, Filicetti said Dorion is covered under the plan.

Dorion was placed on paid medical leave a year ago today, after telling the Nez Perce County commissioners he had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The sheriff was removed from office in August after efforts by the county to contact him to verify his condition were unsuccessful. The commissioners voted to remove Dorion from office on the basis he was no longer a county resident.

He lost county-paid health insurance when he was removed from office, but Filicetti said he was receiving continuing health coverage from the federal health insurance program COBRA up until the time of his arrest.

Dorion was arrested March 2 in Shreveport, La., after charges were filed in Nez Perce County. Filicetti said his client went to Texas and Louisiana to seek treatment for his condition. Filicetti said last week his client had lost about 70 pounds since the two last met face to face.

"He's doing OK; he's got physical issues," Filicetti said Thursday.

The sheriff's office returned Dorion to Idaho April 21, and he had been held in segregation in the Latah County Jail since his appearance in Nez Perce County Magistrate Court last week.

The state attorney general's office is acting as a special prosecutor in lieu of Nez Perce County Prosecutor Dan Spickler, who disqualified himself because of a conflict of interest.

If convicted of felony accessory to burglary, Dorion faces up to five years in prison and/or a \$50,000 fine.

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