

Rammell faces misdemeanor charge

Former gubernatorial candidate has court date set

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By KATHY HEDBERG of the Tribune The Lewiston Tribune

GRANGEVILLE - Former gubernatorial and congressional candidate Rex F. Rammell is scheduled to appear in Magistrate Court here Sept. 27 on a misdemeanor charge of battery involving an altercation with another man a week ago.

An earlier story in the Lewiston Tribune presumptively indicated Rammell was facing a felony charge. The Tribune's story was based on a probable-cause affidavit filed at the Idaho County Courthouse by Idaho County sheriff's Sgt. Carlos Martinez, which didn't indicate whether Rammell would be charged with a felony or a misdemeanor. A formal complaint was filed at the Idaho County Courthouse Friday.

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According to Martinez's report, Rammell is accused of twice grabbing another man by the throat during a Sept. 8 confrontation.

Rammell said during an interview Friday the Sept. 8 incident involving William Shira had to do with the Shiras allegedly trespassing on Rammell's property. Rammell said he had earlier agreed to allow Shira's older son, daughter-in-law and two young children to live in a house Rammell was leasing while he was gone.

Instead, Rammell said, the entire Shira family of about 15 people moved into the house without his permission and when he demanded they leave, the Shiras refused. Later the Shiras did leave but did not remove their belongings. Rammell said he and Keith Keyser, his business partner, moved all of the Shiras' belongings off the property and blew up a mine the Shiras claimed was full of gold.

On Sept. 8, Rammell said he was hunting for bear and spotted William Shira and his son, Than, back on the property near the mine. Rammell confronted the men, demanded they leave and the argument escalated. Rammell said he kicked at William Shira and Shira came back at him with a crowbar but did not make bodily contact. Rammell said he attempted to place the Shiras under citizen's arrest, but the Shiras scoffed at him, then left.

Rammell said he and Keyser later went to the place where the Shiras were staying, intending to put them under citizen's arrest, and Martinez showed up.

Rammell said he believes Martinez was already prejudiced against him because of stories the deputy had heard about a fight Than Shira had been involved in. Rammell said he had nothing to do with the earlier attack on Than Shira and was shocked when Martinez placed him under arrest rather than Shira.

"I was damn mad," Rammell said. He told Martinez: "Nobody's hurt. The thing's over. Go file your report and let the prosecutor do what he's going to do."

Rammell said he was upset Martinez did not plan to file trespass charges against the Shiras. "He took their side right from the beginning," Rammell said.

Rammell said he did tell Martinez he would try to have him fired, as previously reported, but did not resist arrest, as indicated in Martinez's report. Rammell was taken to the Idaho County Jail in Grangeville and Chuck Rogers, a candidate for the Grangeville City Council, paid a \$300 bond to release him.

Rammell also said he was not evicted from the property, as Shira claimed. Rammell said he was leasing the property and when the owner learned Rammell had allowed Shira on the place he was angry.

Rammell said the owner told him he wanted to terminate the lease agreement and sell the property to other people. Rammell said he moved off the property Thursday and is living with Keyser. The two men are raising meat goats, which they plan to winter near Skookumchuck.

Sheriff Doug Giddings said Friday Martinez did nothing wrong in his investigation into this incident, which is ongoing and there is no chance he will lose his job.

"Carlos did his job the way we do it every day," Giddings said. He added there may be possible charges against the Shiras in the future, but the case is still under investigation.

Rammell said he plans to talk to the county prosecutor to persuade him to drop the misdemeanor battery charge against him.

"I'm not going to plead guilty to this," Rammell said. "If this goes to trial I am 100 percent confident I will be acquitted. But I don't want to go to trial. I'm taking on the government. I'm fighting with the Fish and Game (over a previous elk poaching case he plans to appeal).

"I don't want to deal with this."

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