

Navarre woman arrested for felony assault, child abuse

Staff reports
Navarre Press

Lorie Ann Velazquez of Navarre was apprehended in Milton on June 18 for three counts aggravated assault with a deadly weapon without intent to kill, one misdemeanor charge of battery with domestic violence and two counts of felony cruelty toward a child with infliction of physical or mental injury.

Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office issued a warrant for Velazquez's arrest on the night of May 24, when one of the two victims involved placed a call to 911 requesting assistance for a domestic dispute.

According to the incident report, the dispute began at about 11 p.m. on May 23, when the first victim, Velazquez's husband, arrived at Velazquez's home on Chablis Circle in Navarre to see if the second victim, a minor, needed a ride to school.

During the conversation, Velazquez became upset and began yelling at the first victim, and Velazquez then went into the house and the victim got into his truck. When Velazquez emerged from the home, she was carrying a baseball bat.

Velazquez swung the bat at the victim and at his truck, "with full force," according to the report. The victim then got out of the truck, grabbed the bat and refused to let it go, which made Velazquez very upset.

The first victim took the minor with him to his home to spend the night. Ten minutes after they arrived at the Turkey Oak Drive residence, Velazquez showed up and began screaming at the victims again.

"At some point (Velazquez) grabbed (the second victim's) throat," the report states. "(The first victim immediately stepped in and (Velazquez) did not have a chance to apply any pressure to (the second victim's throat)."

Velazquez then grabbed the first victim's throat, and then left the house. The second victim gave a statement to SRSO deputies that stated he believed that Velazquez had been drinking.

"(Velazquez) made the comment that, 'I would sleep with one eye open if I were you because I am coming back with gas and burn this mother [redacted] house down with all you sons of [redacted] in it.'"

The minor victim also stated that Velazquez walked forward and started hitting and slapping the victim. Shortly thereafter, Velazquez returned to the first victim's home, wielding a 2-by-4 and swinging it at the first victim, until he was able to disarm her.

Velazquez left and returned to the victim's residence several times before returning in her vehicle and pulling up onto the sidewalk where the victim was standing. He was on the phone with SRSO, requesting a deputy to be dispatched.

Velazquez could not be contacted that night, but deputies finally apprehended her on June 18 in Milton.



Velazquez

RESTORE

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Lane Lynchard, Santa Rosa County District 5 Commissioner, said the bill was in conference for some time before an agreement was reached and RESTORE was included in a larger transportation bill. He served on an eight-county coalition for Florida and lobbied for the act in Wash-

ington, D.C., in February.

The bill is now waiting for President Barack Obama's signature.

"It really does stand to change not just our county but our region for decades to come," Lynchard said.

According to a press release from Nelson, the language in the bill could give Florida's Gulf Coast a share of what could be as much as \$20 billion in oil spill-related fine

money. The language will be part of a broader agreement between the Republican-controlled House and Democrat-led Senate on a package to pay for bridge and road construction and other transit programs.

Nelson said he and other Gulf state senators insisted that the oil-fine money be part of the broader transit deal. Nelson was among the handful of lawmakers who

negotiated the final transportation package.

"This is something the Gulf Coast very badly needs," he said.

More than one-third of any fines will be allocated directly and equally to the five Gulf Coast states largely for economic recovery. Under Florida law, 75 percent of the state's share will go to the eight most affected Panhandle counties and 25 percent will be available for other Gulf counties.

Melvin

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favorable for a hotel on Navarre Beach.

"Today it moved from if, to when, where and how," said Melvin.

Navarre Beach was home to a Holidome until it was first damaged during Hurricane Opal and eventually torn down after it was damaged again by Hurricane Ivan.

The Santa Rosa County Tourist Development Council has discussed the importance of getting a hotel back on the beach to increase tourism dollars for the county. Members described the former Holidome as not only a hotel, but a place where the community gathered for events.

"(I) took my son there for years ever since he was barely 3...we were there when parts of 'Jaws 2' were being filmed and grew to love the island more and more with each visit," J Curtis wrote on the Navarre Press website. "(I) am currently looking for a place to move to permanently on the island and am job searching as well. Hope things work out for the Holidome. It would be a great asset for the island."

Commissioners discussed offering an incentive package for hotels on the beach in March but never made any formal motion.

The Santa Rosa County Zoning Board will discuss changing the zoning of the property where the Holidome used to sit during its July board meeting.

County staff is asking the Zoning Board to rezone the 17.88 acres from Navarre Beach Hotel and Navarre Beach High Density Residential to Navarre Beach Commercial. County Planning Director Becky Cato said that the county development staff initiated the change because of "an error that was made years ago."

She said the hotel property was accidentally left out when the county's master plan was updated. The Navarre Beach Hotel zoning district restrictions don't exist anymore, according to Cato. She said staff wanted to take care of the error now before any other plans are made for the property.

District 1

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Cotton also said he had not actively sought out contributions, and that his campaign is largely self-funded.

According to financial records, Cotton has a net worth of about \$2.2 million with about \$548,000 in liabilities. The bulk of his assets derive from real estate, stock ownership and cash.

His stated income for 2011 came from his businesses Cotton Real Estate, Inc. and Cotton Electric, Inc. as well as income derived from rent and casino resorts in Biloxi, Miss. During the year, Cotton claimed almost \$50,000 in income from IP Casino Resort and about \$15,000 from Hard Rock Casino.

As of March 31, Cotton had a total of \$1,604 in contributions with \$515.55 in expenditures.

Stewart listed his net worth at \$795,000 on the county financial documents with about \$108,000 in liabilities. His income for 2011 was about \$45,000.

Stewart did not return two phone messages seeking comment by press time.

Stewart's contributions as of March 31 totaled \$1,350 and he has spent about half of it.

Miller filed late and therefore his campaign contributions and expenditures will not be available until July 13. However, he listed is net worth at \$300,000 with \$100,000 in liabilities. His income comes from his retirement and Social Security.

The salary for county commissioner is set by the state and at the present time is a little over \$58,581.

The primaries are set for Aug. 14. Districts 3 and 5 county commissioner candidates' financial information will be provided in the July 12 issue of Navarre Press.

Candidates spar at forum



Photo by Joanna Hammond

Republican candidates for office take a moment from delivering their stump speeches to pose with Santa Rosa Federated Republican Women's Club President Martha Brenenstahl. Pictured from left are Don Spencer, Dr. George McCormick, Bruce Miller, Jayer Williamson, James Owens and Doug Broxson.

By Joanna Hammond
Navarre Press

Local Republican candidates for various offices came to deliver stump speeches and answer questions from voters on June 26 at the Santa Rosa Federated Republican Women's club luncheon at the Club at Hidden Creek.

Candidates who spoke at the luncheon included Donny "Don" Spencer, candidate for clerk of court, Dr. George McCormick, candidate for superintendent of schools, Bruce Miller, candidate for public defender, circuit 1, James Owens, seeking re-election as public defender, circuit 1, Jayer Williamson, running for District 3 state representative and Doug Broxson, seeking re-election as District 3 state representative.

Each candidate was given three minutes to deliver a campaign speech aimed at the crowd of GOP voters, and most candidates used their time to discuss their plans for their intended office.

McCormick spoke of bringing fiscal responsibility into Santa Rosa County schools, saying that the district had "a pay package like Chicago." He promised to reduce administrative staff at the central administrative complex by 10 percent and direct that money "back to the classroom."

He also discussed the use of the district's Visa cards to purchase construction supplies while avoiding paying state and local sales taxes, and said that the top administrators in the district are flown to sporting events.

When called later for clar-

ification, McCormick said that he had been told by "several key witnesses" that top administrators for the district had been flown to a sporting event for Pace High School when several county vehicles were already traveling to the same location. McCormick felt that this represented an inappropriate use of county funds.

Superintendent and candidate for re-election Tim Wyrosdick commented on the allegations during a follow-up interview.

"There are times when an administrator, because of conflicting schedules, could need to be at an event in Navarre, Pace, Gulf Breeze and then need to be in Orlando or Tallahassee, but I am confident that is rare," he said. He added that records of official travel in Santa Rosa County School District are public.

Spencer used his time to talk about his strong ties to Santa Rosa County, and his plan, through attrition, to save the county money by allowing two of the highest paid positions in the clerk of court's office to remain unfilled when those employees retire.

Spencer also said that he would serve a maximum of three terms.

"I'll be 68 years old and it will be time for somebody to come behind me," he said.

Owens, incumbent public defender, asked for another term in office, stressing his experience. He said that the public defender's office, which serves Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton counties, has provided services to over 35,000 cases with no loss in services, even with the budgetary

restrictions placed on his office by the state.

"For the system to really work you have to have a good public defender's office. I have experience as a prosecutor and experience as a public defender," he said.

Miller, Owens' opponent, talked about his experience in business as well as law and the changes he would bring to the office of the public defender. Miller has worked in the office previously as well as in private practice and said "I know the office."

"I believe that we need a public defender's office that needs to be accountable to the people," he said.

Miller noted that under Owens, the cost per case rose significantly and he said his experience running his own businesses would help him bring costs down in the public defender's office.

"I worked hard to establish a reputation of being honest and responsible," he said.

Williamson spoke about his plans, if elected, to focus on community service and building Northwest Florida for his children and their peers. Williamson, a local businessman from Pace, said that his record of service to the community as well as his family and business ties to Santa Rosa made him the right choice for the office.

"All people who go to serve should be focused on the next generation," said Williamson, who promised leadership and commitment to the constituents if elected.

Broxson, the incumbent state representative, began his speech with a question.

"One of the reasons I'd like to be a part of the board is that it's been well managed and one of the things that makes it attractive to me is to be a part of a board that has had success," he said.

"If there's something I wanted to improve upon it's just the reputation and the confidence the community has in the fire department and the guys out there working."

VanValkenburgh said he felt his 20 years of experience made him a qualified candidate for fire commissioner and if elected, he looks forward to helping the department weather the growing

"How do you judge the future?" he asked. "By the past."

Broxson listed his supporters as the peanut and cotton farmers in the north end of Santa Rosa County, District 4 Commissioner Jim Melvin, leaders in Tallahassee, Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi and Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney.

After the speeches, the audience was given a chance to ask questions of the candidates, and many were directed at McCormick.

When asked if electronic signs in front of the county schools were costing the district money to keep them lit, McCormick responded that in his past experience in other districts, not all buildings were left open during the summer.

If elected, McCormick said, he would close most buildings during the summer months and have faculty and administrators work out of several central buildings in order to save money.

Owens was asked about Bud Day, a U.S. Air Force veteran who had served in the public defender's office and was reportedly receiving benefits from the state while on administrative or medical leave.

Owens said that Day was not on salary and received no benefits from his office.

Miller challenged that statement, saying "It is my understanding that (Day) gets some benefits from the insurance."

Time constraints of the forum prevented further discussion between Owens and Miller.

VanValkenburgh

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VanValkenburgh, "I'm a sergeant/paramedic with South Walton Fire Department."

"I really don't have a formal background in finances," said VanValkenburgh, "but just from the experience I have being around the business for so long I think I understand the budgeting and how it works."

VanValkenburgh has certification through the state of Florida as part of his company office management that includes fire administration and legal and ethical courses.

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pains that Navarre is going to go through in the coming years.

"One of the biggest things is that Navarre is growing so fast and a lot of people don't see it or don't want to see it but I can say that I see it, and there are a lot of growing pains with it," he said.

"The fire department has grown and I think the perception is that all of the sudden we have a full time fire department, and all of the sudden they want more taxed and a lot of people see they want more money," he said. "As soon as a fire department wants to raise taxes or raise impact fees, it puts a bad taste

in a lot of citizens' mouth because they don't understand where this money will go and how it will benefit them in the future. It's difficult to sell, especially in this economic time."

VanValkenburgh had nothing but praise for the HNFID firefighters themselves.

"I know those guys down there do a wonderful job, they work in some pretty severe environments, and I just want to see them get the support they deserve and in the long run they are citizens as well and it's their home and families and properties out there that need to be protected."