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Baker-Zachary bureau

November 02, 2012

A former Baker City Court probation officer was arrested Thursday after allegedly accepting a \$200 bribe from a former city employee who had to take a drug test because of an accident.

Peron McCastle, 50, 14056 Brantley Drive, Baker, was booked at East Baton Rouge Parish Prison on one count of public bribery, according to booking records.

The FBI investigated the case initially and then turned it over to the state Office of Inspector General for possible prosecution on a state charge, said Greg Phares, chief investigator for the Inspector General's Office.

An affidavit to support an arrest warrant obtained Tuesday says McCastle was responsible for administering mandatory drug screens to city employees involved in traffic accidents while driving city vehicles.

On Aug. 26, 2010, former Baker public works employee Taurus Matthews backed a city vehicle into a pole and was required to submit a urine sample to be tested for drugs, the affidavit says.

After administering the drug test, McCastle reported to Matthews and Matthews' supervisor that the test was negative for banned substances.

However, while Matthews was leaving the office, McCastle allegedly told Matthews he actually had failed the test and that he, McCastle, had done Matthews a favor by reporting the negative result, the affidavit says.

At that time, according to the affidavit, McCastle told Matthews that he needed \$200 to handle the paperwork for the urinalysis, but Matthews later told investigators he believed his test results actually had turned out negative.

The affidavit says Matthews made arrangements on Sept. 1, 2010, in a recorded telephone call, to give McCastle the \$200 payment.

During an audio and video-recorded conversation later the same day in McCastle's office, Matthews asked for assurances that he would be straight after paying McCastle the \$200, and McCastle replied, "Yeah."

The FBI supplied Matthews with the money that was given to McCastle, the affidavit continues.

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During their conversation, McCastle told Matthews he had to give part of the \$200 to co-workers at Baker City Court who got a part to do first, the affidavit says.

When two FBI agents questioned McCastle on May 12, 2011, about the incident, McCastle denied ever being offered money from anyone who tested positive on a drug screen and denied ever taking money from a city employee.

After the agents told McCastle that they knew he had accepted \$200 in FBI money from a city employee, McCastle asked for an attorney and the meeting ended, the affidavit says.

McCastle was dismissed from his probation officer's job on Sept. 30, 2011, according to city records.

Baker City Court Judge Kirk Williams, who appointed and subsequently terminated McCastle, did not respond to a message left on his cellphone Thursday.



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