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CRIME

Ex-Titusville officer pleads to misdemeanor in Edinboro drug case

Tim Hahn
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MCKEAN — A former Titusville police officer accused by Edinboro police of seeking to purchase cocaine before he was hired onto the Titusville police force pleaded guilty March 9 to a misdemeanor charge in the case.

McKean District Judge Denise Stuck-Lewis sentenced James M. Carlson, 27, of Meadville, to one year of probation and ordered him to undergo a drug and alcohol evaluation on Carlson's guilty plea to one count of possession of a controlled substance, according to court documents and Carlson's lawyer, Chad Vilushis. Carlson was also ordered to pay a fine and court costs.

In exchange for the plea, prosecutors withdrew a third-degree felony count of criminal use of a communication facility and a second misdemeanor possession charge that Carlson also faced in the case.

Vilushis said after the plea was made that he was pleased with the sentence Carlson received, given that he was no longer facing a felony count. He said Carlson is very much focused on getting the matter behind him and moving forward with his life.

Separate drug probe leads to charges

The Edinboro Police Department charged Carlson Dec. 19. According to police and case documents, authorities in late June served a search warrant on an Ontario

Street apartment in Edinboro in a separate drug probe in which more than 60 grams of suspected cocaine and other items were seized.

Police later reviewed information from the Snapchat account of the person they were focused on in the June search and said they found conversations in which Carlson was suspected of facilitating drug transactions, specifically to purchase cocaine, with the other man on Snapchat.

At the time the charges were filed against Carlson, he was a member of the Titusville Police Department, having been hired in mid-July. Carlson resigned from the department Dec. 22, according to Titusville's public safety commissioner.

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Hearing postponed for second man

A few weeks after Carlson was charged, Edinboro police charged the man who was the focus of the June search at the borough apartment.

Charles T. Ross, 53, was charged in January with felony counts of criminal use of a communication facility and possession with intent to deliver and with misdemeanor counts of possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was also scheduled to have his preliminary hearing before Stuck-Lewis March 9, but his lawyer, Ken Bickel, said Ross had a medical issue and the hearing would be continued.

A new hearing date was not scheduled March 9.

Contact Tim Hahn at thahn@usatodayco.com.