

News

Charges dropped for Pollitt

Sunday, September 14, 2008

By the Associated Press

NEW LONDON — A state prosecutor dropped a probation violation charge against serial rapist David Pollitt on Friday, a day after Gov. M. Jodi Rell called on officials to send him back to prison.

New London State's Attorney Michael L. Regan said he withdrew the charge after learning that Pollitt's electronic tracking device was not working properly.

Pollitt, 55, was arrested Wednesday on an allegation that he violated his probation by leaving his sister's home in Southbury unsupervised for about 15 minutes on Sept. 3.

Pollitt served 24 years in prison for attacks on women in Old Lyme, Waterford, Killingworth, Rocky Hill and Wallingford.

His release and relocation to his sister's home last year prompted outrage in the neighborhood and a statewide debate about the lack of housing for sex offenders who complete their sentences.

Rell and state Attorney General Richard Blumenthal went to court last year in an unsuccessful attempt to block Pollitt from moving into his sister's home.

Rell also asked Chief State's Attorney Kevin Kane on Thursday to immediately send Pollitt back to prison based on the alleged probation violation.

Rell and Blumenthal said Friday that they want the GPS problems investigated, but the governor stopped short of offering an apology to Pollitt as his attorney had requested.

"Mr. Pollitt needs to be equipped immediately with a dependable and accurate means of tracking his movements," the governor said. "At the first violation of his probation conditions, no matter how minor, he should be remanded to prison."

The probation violation charge was withdrawn Friday morning when Pollitt made an appearance in New London Superior Court.

After the hearing, his attorney, Ioannis A. Kaloidis, decried what he called the "lynch mob mentality" of elected officials before they knew the facts of the case.

Pollitt, his sister and his attorney said he was building a stone wall in his sister's yard at the time the GPS monitoring device on his ankle recorded that he was off the property.

A day after the arrest warrant was signed, officials said, the company that provides the GPS unit told probation officers that the

device was not working properly that day.

Electronic monitoring devices use GPS, or global positioning systems. They alert officials when offenders are out of their approved ranges, and if the units are being tampered with.

Jerry Attanasio, one of Pollitt's attorneys, said this week that they have told probation officials that their client's ankle unit has a history of problems.

Attanasio said that when Pollitt was building the stone wall, the tracking device indicated that he was walking quickly or running through the woods to another street at 4 miles per hour.

Attanasio doubts Pollitt can move that fast because of health problems. Pollitt's lawyers and his sister also say his ankle unit has been replaced more than five times in 11 months because it repeatedly tracks him in the wrong location.

That includes times when he was asleep in bed at home and awakened by a call from probation officers, who were alerted by the system that he was out of range.

Blumenthal said Friday that he will contact the state Judicial Branch and Kane's office to launch an investigation into the tracking service and the contractor that oversees it.

He calls accurate tracking "absolutely vital" to public safety and the reputation of Connecticut's criminal justice system.

Rell called the tracking problem "disappointing and frankly maddening," saying the state needs reassurances about whether the GPS units are reliable and what safeguards will be enacted to prevent future mistakes.

"We use GPS tracking for a reason. In fact we pay quite a bit of money for it — but it's not about the money, it's about safety," she said.

URL: <http://www.nhregister.com/articles/2008/09/14/news/a3-rapist.prt>

© 2009 nhregister.com, a **Journal Register** Property