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Press Release

April 13, 2017

Former superintendent charged with misappropriation of school district funds

Berrien County Prosecutor, Michael Sepic, announced today that former Benton Harbor Area Schools superintendent, Dr. Leonard Seawood, has been charged with criminal counts related to his alleged misappropriation of school district funds. Seawood, 56, of Benton Harbor, was superintendent of schools from July of 2010 to October of 2015.

The charges relate to Seawood's contract which permitted a cash payout for a maximum of 5 unused vacation days each year. The contract allotted 25 vacation days to Seawood per year. It is alleged Seawood caused to be issued a cash payout for more than the allowed 5 days as follows: in 2012, 45 extra days; in 2013, 16 extra days; in 2014, 9 extra days; and in 2015, 5 extra days. Extra day cash payouts, over and above the 5 days allowed amounted to approximately \$45,000.00.

Seawood is charged with 1 count of Embezzlement \$20,000 to \$50,000, a 10 year felony and an alternative count of Obtaining Money by False Pretenses \$20,000 to \$50,000, a 15 year felony. The charges cover the time period of June 2012 to April 2015.

On May 1, 2015, the Benton Harbor Area Schools Board of Education requested an investigation concerning the activities of Dr. Seawood be conducted by Rehmann Corporate Investigative Services. As a result of that investigation, which noted numerous areas of concern, the Michigan State Police began an investigation that resulted in the above mentioned charges.

Seawood was suspended by the BHAS Board of Education April 30, 2015 and he resigned pursuant to a termination agreement accepted by the Board on October 13, 2015.

At his arraignment today, bond was set at \$10,000.00, 10% and was posted immediately. His pre-exam conference and preliminary exam hearing are scheduled for April 21, 2017 and April 27, 2017 respectively, both at 8:30 am in the Berrien County Trial Court in St. Joseph, Michigan.

The charges are accusations at this time and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

Press release available at County Web site:

<http://www.berriencounty.org/ProsecutingAttorney/pressreleases>