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October 02, 2010

Prosecutor John Bujak owes Canyon County \$280K

The prosecutor resigns, saying 'issues in my personal life have become a significant distraction.'

BY PATRICK ORR AND KATHLEEN KRELLER - newsroom@idahostatesman.com

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John Bujak's sudden resignation - and massive bill - are the latest chapters in an ongoing controversy about whether he should personally profit from a \$598,000 contract he signed with Nampa.

Canyon County records indicate Bujak was paid as much as \$743,000 by Nampa since August 2009, when he took over prosecution of the city's misdemeanor cases. Bujak has paid the county \$372,499 over that time, Canyon County Clerk Bill Hurst said. But Bujak didn't pay the \$288,589 he owed the county by the end of the fiscal year, which ended Thursday.

That bill covers overhead such as utilities, office equipment and supplies and cost savings that were supposed to be passed on to the county, Hurst said.

In a letter submitted to commissioners late Thursday, Bujak said he was resigning because "I am unable to meet the high standards I have come to expect from my staff."

Bujak has said he'll repay the money, said Canyon County Commissioner David Ferdinand, who also indicated that Bujak could face civil and criminal actions.

Interim prosecutor Tim Fleming asked the Latah County prosecutors office to investigate. Nampa police Chief Bill Augsburg said city officials have asked a different - and undisclosed - law enforcement agency to do a separate investigation.

"We feel John Bujak has a lot of questions to answer," Nampa spokeswoman Sharla Arledge said Friday.

Bujak took over the Canyon County post from embattled former prosecutor Dave Young in 2008 and positioned himself as a reformer. Last year, he outbid a private law firm to handle all of Nampa's misdemeanor cases.

He told the Idaho Statesman earlier this year that the arrangement - in which Nampa paid \$49,863 a month directly to Bujak instead of the county - saved the city at least \$150,000 and would save the county about \$276,000 a year. He boosted the pay of some employees in the county prosecutor's office to handle the extra work.

Until 5 p.m. Thursday, Ferdinand believed the county had a good deal.

"By him resigning, he is saying, 'I should have paid it by 5 p.m.,'" Ferdinand said. "His resigning moves him and his contract out of the way."

Ferdinand declined to answer whether the county and city had been duped. He also declined to describe Bujak's personal issues.

"The biggest pressure point is all the receivables needed to be in," Ferdinand said.

While Bujak made bimonthly payments of approximately \$9,000 to Canyon County to pay the salary bumps for his staff, he did not pay much of the balance for the rest of the contract.

Earlier this year, Nampa resident Bob Henry sued Bujak in an effort to force him to divulge his financial records in connection with the Nampa contract. Senior District Judge Kathryn Sticklen dismissed the lawsuit in July, determining Bujak's bank account for the contract was a private document.

Henry, who appealed Sticklen's ruling in September, said earlier this summer that he was concerned that Bujak had received about \$259,000 more from the city than he had remitted to the county to cover expenses.

Bujak said in July that was because he hadn't been billed for those expenses yet, and everything owed would be paid by Sept. 30.

On Friday, Henry said the Idaho Supreme Court would review the case.

Bujak has had financial troubles since taking over as Canyon County prosecutor. His Nampa home went into foreclosure in 2009, and Idaho court records list a variety of civil claims against him.

Friday's developments were "a huge deal" for Bujak in terms of his personal life, career and reputation, Ferdinand said.

Fleming will act as interim prosecutor while the Canyon County Republican Central Committee nominates three candidates to take over the position full time.

Canyon County commissioners will then choose one of the three. The process is expected to take about 30 days.

The Nampa City Council expects to sign a new contract with the prosecutor's office Monday.

Patrick Orr: 373-6619