

Marshal sentenced to jail time, public presentations and thousands in fines ()

BY CHRISTIAAN MADER (BY-AUTHOR-180-1.HTML)



Photo by Robin May

City Marshal Brian Pope was sentenced to seven days of jail time and ordered to pay upwards of \$100,000 in attorneys fees, court costs and penalties in our ongoing public records dispute. The ruling bookends months of court proceedings between the marshal and this newspaper, over the marshal's failure to turn over emails and records in connection with the use of his office to boost Chad Leger's failed campaign for sheriff.

Pope's jail time, which can be served under house arrest, is part of a 30-day suspended sentence. He will serve four years of unsupervised probation. If he violates his probation, he will serve the remaining 23 days of suspended imprisonment.

In his ruling, 15th Judicial District Court Judge Jules Edwards III painted a picture of a law enforcement official who believed himself above the law by "willfully and obstinately" failing to comply with two public records requests, flaunting court orders meant to remedy that failure and appearing armed and in uniform while in court.

"There is a long-standing rule in this court that law enforcement officers who are the named parties in litigation are not allowed to come into the courtroom while armed and in uniform," Edwards read from his ruling. "The rationale for this rule is the safety of the bailiffs and prevention of witness intimidation. The marshal's conduct in this regard is another example of his apparent attitude that he is above the law."

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Pope enters the Lafayette Parish Courthouse for day one of his contempt hearing.

Photo by Robin May

Indeed, the court's judgments were rife with the kind of punitive irony that could indicate that Edwards sought to make an example of Pope. Besides the jail time and fees, the court ordered Pope to serve 173 hours of community service by giving public presentations on public records law. That's 173 hours for 173 days elapsed in non-compliance with The IND's two public records requests.

He noted that Pope lied under oath about the extent to which Leger's campaign was involved in an October press conference attacking Leger's opponent, Mark Garber. Pope supported Leger in the 2015 campaign which Garber ultimately won.

That press conference episode is what prompted The IND's initial public records requests. From the beginning, this newspaper suspected Leger's campaign manager, Hilary "Joe" Castille, orchestrated the press conference, a fact substantiated by records obtained over the course of the dispute.

In what could be described as a subtle overture to criminal prosecution, Edwards alluded to perjury and malfeasance charges that have loomed over the case history.

"The events that gave rise to this litigation may serve as ground to investigate Marshal Pope for various crimes such as perjury, malfeasance, and others," Edwards said. "This court specifically did not and could not consider those questions because the marshal has not been formally charged with those offenses."

While this brings an end to The IND's specific involvement in the case, the ruling and facts recounted could lead to criminal or ethics investigations.



[\(http://npaper-wehaa.com/the-current/2017/06/\)](http://npaper-wehaa.com/the-current/2017/06/)

Pope was ordered to report to Lafayette Parish Correctional Center on Monday, March 28, to begin serving his sentence.

If you're not caught up with the public records saga, [you can check out our timeline of the story here](http://theind.com/article-22905-Our-unaccountable-city-marshal-%E2%80%94-a-timeline.html). (<http://theind.com/article-22905-Our-unaccountable-city-marshal-%E2%80%94-a-timeline.html>)

And The Advocate has a good story about [today's ruling here](http://theadvocate.com/news/15289214-173/lafayette-city-marshal-sentenced-to-jail-and-ordered-to-pay-almost-100000-in-public-records-case) (<http://theadvocate.com/news/15289214-173/lafayette-city-marshal-sentenced-to-jail-and-ordered-to-pay-almost-100000-in-public-records-case>).

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