

Deseret News

LDS seminary principal in court, hands over evidence

By **Sara Israelsen-Hartley**

Deseret News

Published: Monday, July 13, 2009 12:08 p.m. MDT

PROVO — Officers came to court Monday morning prepared to re-arrest a former LDS seminary principal accused of sexual misconduct with a 16-year-old student.

Michael J. Pratt, 37, the former principal at Lone Peak High School's LDS seminary program, was arrested Thursday on numerous allegations, but was bailed out on \$20,000 cash-only bail at 3:37 a.m. Saturday.

"Look," an emotional Pratt told the media upon exiting the courtroom. "I am hopeful that the truth will be fully presented at the appropriate time."

Officers from the Utah County Special Victims Task Force came to 4th District Court Monday for Pratt's review of bail hearing to express concern that Pratt may have been tampering with evidence on his laptop computer.

Prosecutor Guy Probert told Judge Steven Hansen that there were some "evidentiary questions" relating to the laptop, which had been sent out of the area with Pratt's family after the allegations surfaced. It is believed that the computer belongs to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but Probert could not officially confirm that.

"The laptop is being returned by mail. A copy of the hard drive is being produced today," Probert said.

Had an agreement not been reached to return the hard drive, "the officer came ready to arrest him," the prosecutor said.

The agreement between prosecutors, Pratt's temporary attorney and the officer also included the caveat that Pratt not go back to his seminary office or a mine in Eureka, as police are still gathering evidence at those locations.

Pratt — who police say developed a relationship with the student through hundreds of text messages and numerous outings to canyons in the county where the two would allegedly engage in sex acts — has not been officially charged, as Monday's hearing was only a review of bail.

"Because he was not represented at the bail hearing, Howard thought the question of bail needed to be reviewed today," Probert said. "But it was irrelevant, because he bailed out."

Prosecutors are still waiting for all the police reports before they file charges, Probert said. Pratt will be in court again Monday, July 20, at 8:30 a.m. for an official felony first appearance. At that point, he can apply for the public defender.

"I'm not going to appoint a lawyer for him until he's charged, if he's charged," Hansen told Pratt's temporary attorney.

However, Pratt was released from his seminary position as soon as the allegations surfaced, according to LDS Church spokeswoman Kim Farah.

A handful of supporters showed up to support Pratt during the hearing and waited with him for nearly two and a half hours while a family member went to get the copy of the hard drive and turn it over to officers.

e-mail: sisraelsen@desnews.com

© 2009 Deseret News Publishing Company | All rights reserved