

Bench warrant issued for Retzlaff

Campground owner skips court hearing on charges of fleeing officers, reckless endangering safety

By **LEE PULASKI**
City Editor

A bench warrant has been issued for the arrest of Annie's Campground owner Ann Retzlaff on Oct. 26 after she was again a no-show in court.

Her hearing was scheduled for 1:30 p.m., but due to other hearings, her case did not come up until almost 3 p.m., and she was still not present. Judge William Kussel Jr. said the defendant, who is facing charges from both Shawano and Menominee counties related to a high-speed chase, had sent emails to the Shawano-Menominee County Circuit Court.

In Shawano County, Retzlaff is being charged with felony fleeing and eluding officers and two counts of second-degree recklessly endangering the safety of those officers, along with a misdemeanor count of resisting and obstructing an officer. In Menominee County, she is being charged with a misdemeanor count of resisting and failing to stop.

The first email was sent to the court at 12:51 p.m. informing the judge that Retzlaff had asked the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty (WILL), based in Milwaukee, to defend her, but the organization did not have anyone available to take her case.

"They said even though my case had merit, they cannot take on any more cases at this time," Retzlaff wrote. "I'm able to self-represent. Under the Sixth Amendment, it grants me the right for me to appear as myself on



ANN RETZLAFF

my own behalf. I am a human being protected under the Constitution."

WILL states on its website that it takes on cases involving free speech, workers' freedom, open government, good government and other individual rights, claiming it has prevailed in over 75% of its cases.

A second email came at 1:04 p.m. where she proclaimed herself as "a sovereign being of light" — something she had called herself at an earlier court hearing in August — and said she sent an email to Clerk of Courts Ethan Schmidt and Shawano-Menominee County District Attorney Greg Parker saying she would not present her case until "we are back under common law, laws of nature, God's law."

Retzlaff also said in the second email that she doesn't feel safe entering the courthouse, "nor do I safe leaving my property at this time."

Kussel said Retzlaff sent a third email that included a lot of Bible verses and was too lengthy to read into the record.

"The fact of the matter is, she's not here," Kussel said, noting her absence had not been excused by the court.

Assistant District Attorney Laura Nelson told the judge she wasn't convinced that Retzlaff would be present without court action.

"My conclusion is that Ann Retzlaff has no intention of presenting herself to the court," Nelson said. "In light of that, the state would ask that a warrant for Ms. Retzlaff be issued in each of these cases in the amount of the bonds that have been set."

Nelson also asked for forfeitures on the bonds that had already been posted, which Kussel granted.

Kussel went a little beyond Nelson's request, issuing a bench warrant with a \$3,000 bond in the felony cases, double the \$1,500 that had been posted previously. He also stipulated there would be a \$500 bond for the misdemeanor cases, the same amount Retzlaff had posted.

Retzlaff was also facing traffic citations in Menominee County for failing to obey a traffic officer or signal, which had a bond of \$175.30, and Shawano County for failing to stop at a stop sign, which had the same bond amount. Kussel declared her guilty by default on the traffic citations.

This is the second time Retzlaff was not at a scheduled court hearing. On Oct. 5, Retzlaff did not attend and informed the court she was ill. Kussel granted an adjournment to Oct. 26 but stipulated Retzlaff must attend in person.

On May 15, a Shawano County deputy heard on Menominee County radio traffic about a high-speed chase involving a vehicle registered to Retzlaff for failing to stop at a traffic light, according to the criminal complaint. The chase, starting in Keshena

on state Highway 47-55, continued through the towns of Wescott and Richmond, where deputies twice laid out spike strips, and ended on state Highway 29 just west of County Road MMM.

Deputies with Shawano and Menominee counties initiated a "high-risk stop," according to the complaint, and shut down traffic on the highway's westbound lanes. A lieutenant advised Retzlaff to get out of the vehicle, but she allegedly said she was a "sovereign citizen" and would not exit. A deputy used a slim jim to open the passenger door, which is when Retzlaff allegedly tried to drive off, nearly hitting two Shawano County officials.

Eventually, the vehicle was stopped again, and deputies pulled Retzlaff out of her vehicle. According to the complaint, as she was being handcuffed and searched, she claimed the deputies were involved with covering up sex trafficking and said she was rescuing one of her employees from a sex trafficking house on "Crow Territory" in Menominee County.

Retzlaff has had other cases in Shawano County. In April, she had restraining orders against her for harassing Shawano County Supervisor Joe Miller and his wife, Jackie Miller. In November 2020, a guilty verdict due to a no contest plea was entered against Retzlaff for a case where she made a phone call and claimed she was a sheriff's deputy.

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Shawano school tax levy, budget approved

By **LEE PULASKI**
City Editor

The Shawano School Board signed off Oct. 25 on its 2021-22 budget, which will see taxes go down slightly overall for property owners.

The tax rate has hovered at \$9.58 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation for several years, but that will drop to \$9.56 for 2022. That means the owner of a property valued at \$100,000 would pay \$956 in taxes specifically for the school district.

The total levy will be just shy of \$14.7 million for the district in 2022, according to Finance Director Josh

Swanson. He noted that the district's general fund saw an increase of \$608,000, a result of an increase in anticipated taxes and state school aid, which he said was a good news-bad news kind of scenario for the public schools.

"We had a higher decline in enrollment than we'd originally anticipated," Swanson said. "The good news is that it increases our revenue short-term, but it does not help us in future years."

Swanson noted that there was an increase in expenses of \$180,000, which he attributed to the increase in vouchers. He estimated an additional 20-22 students were going to private

schools and utilizing public school funds using the voucher program.

Equalized value for property is often a factor in the tax rate, and Swanson said the current valuations show property within the district went up 5% overall, which is why the levy jumped up from last year's \$14 million. While the equalized value can result in a wider swing either direction of the tax rate, the district has been trying to keep it consistent to try and avoid sticker shock for taxpayers if there is a sharp drop in property values.

"Right now, it's on a steep up," board member Mart Grams noted.

The tax levy received preliminary approval from the community at the Shawano School District's annual meeting on Sept. 27, but still requires the board to give final approval once all the key information — including student enrollment numbers and 2021 equalized property values — is received. Enrollment numbers are not available until schools conduct their third Friday count, which takes place in September, and property values are furnished to school districts in mid-October.

The total expenditure budget is \$32.3 million, a decrease of more than \$100,000.

Retzlaff arrested on warrant, posts bond

Case involving high-speed chase in Shawano, Menominee counties drags on

By **LEE PULASKI**
City Editor

Ann Retzlaff, the campground owner who is being charged with criminal acts stemming from a high-speed chase in May, was arrested on a bench warrant from Shawano-Menominee County Circuit Court for failing to appear for a hearing and has since posted the \$3,500 bond to free herself again.

Retzlaff failed to appear before Judge William Kussel at a hearing on Oct. 26, prompting Kussel to issue a bench warrant compelling her to appear. Retzlaff had sent emails to the court on the day of the hearing saying she would not present her case until “we are back under common law, laws of nature, God’s law.”



ANN RETZLAFF

Retzlaff, who has said in the emails and previously in court that she was “a sovereign being of light,” was taken into custody after 11 a.m. on Oct. 27 and booked into the jail about two hours later, according to Sheriff Adam Bieber.

Court records show Retzlaff posted the bond in cases spanning both Shawano and Menominee counties later in the day. She is scheduled to appear before Kussel on Nov. 23 at 1:30 p.m. regarding the bench warrant.

On May 15, a Shawano County deputy heard on Menominee County radio traffic about a high-speed chase involving a vehicle registered to Retzlaff for failing to stop at a traffic light, according to the criminal complaint. The chase, starting in Keshena on state Highway 47-55, continued through the towns of Wescott and Richmond, where deputies twice laid out spike strips, and ended on state

Highway 29 just west of County Road MMM.

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Eventually, the vehicle was stopped again, and deputies pulled Retzlaff out of her vehicle. According to the complaint, as she was being handcuffed and searched, she claimed the deputies were involved with covering up sex trafficking and said she was rescuing one of her employees from a sex trafficking house on “Crow Territory” in Menominee County.

Retzlaff has had other cases in Shawano County. In April, she had restraining orders against her for harassing Shawano County Supervisor Joe Miller and his wife, Jackie Miller.

In November 2020, a guilty verdict due to a no contest plea was entered against Retzlaff for a case where she made a phone call and claimed she was a sheriff’s deputy.

Retzlaff has yet to have a preliminary hearing on the charges stemming from the high-speed chase. On May 25, she appeared before Kussel and claimed she needed more time to find an attorney. Normally, that would be required within 10 days, but Retzlaff waived the time limit, noting that it was the busy season for her campground, so Kussel agreed to schedule the hearing for Aug. 13.

When Aug. 13 came around, Retzlaff informed Kussel that she still had not found an attorney who was “constitutionally sound” and “not actively involved in many cases.” Kussel agreed to continue the case until Oct. 5 but warned there would be no more continuances.

On Oct. 5, Retzlaff was not present but had informed prosecutors she was ill, which prompted the hearing to be rescheduled again for Oct. 26.

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Erdmann featured speaker for Veterans Day

Jerry Erdmann, a Vietnam veteran and current member of the Shawano County Board of Supervisors, will be the featured speaker for the Allied Vets Council ceremony on Veterans Day.

The event will begin at 11 a.m. Nov. 11 outside the Shawano County Courthouse, 311 N. Main St., Shawano. In the event that weather is not on the council’s side, the event will be moved into the new Shawano Ambulance facility across the street.

Erdmann once served as chair-

man of the county board, and he never let a board meeting pass when he didn’t ask for people to think about this country’s veterans and current military during the silent meditation.

The ceremony will also include the performance of the national anthem by Patty Ainsworth and a rifle squad staffed by the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 206, along with the presentation of the wreath at the veterans memorial on the east side of the courthouse.

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Retzlaff skips court; new bench warrant issued

Campground owner files letters claiming concern about COVID-19, claims court has no jurisdiction

By LEE PULASKI
City Editor

Ann Retzlaff, the campground owner who faces multiple charges stemming from a police chase in May, was once again a no-show in court on Nov. 23, prompting Shawano-Menominee Circuit Court Judge William Kussel Jr. to issue a new bench warrant compelling her to appear.

The new one was submitted as body-only, which means Retzlaff will not be able to post bail this time and will remain in jail until she makes her next appearance before the judge. Kussel had previously issued a bench warrant for Retzlaff when she did not appear for a court date in October, but the warrant had \$3,500 in bonds that Retzlaff immediately paid.

Retzlaff had sent three letters the night before and the day of the court hearing stating that she would not appear. In one of the letters, Retzlaff claimed she felt she wasn't safe in the courtroom, due to COVID-19, which drew comments from both Kussel and Assistant District Attorney Joseph Kaupie, with the latter noting that COVID-19 had been an issue all over for more than 18 months.

"There was no reason to wait until 5:30 the evening before and then requesting a special accommodation if there was some underlying medical issue that was justified," Kaupie said.

Kussel noted that the court was adhering to all the COVID-19 protocols laid out by the state, and he added that anyone entering the courtroom has the option to wear a mask if they are concerned about contracting coronavirus.

"She has provided no justification that she has any kind of special need," Kussel said.

Retzlaff has gained notoriety for being a fierce opponent of business closures and masking during the pan-

demic, telling the Leader and other media outlets in 2020 that she would call law enforcement if anyone entered her camp wearing a mask.

Kussel noted that in one of the letters, Retzlaff claimed the circuit court could not compel her to appear. The letter also said the previous bench warrant was invalid because it lacked a signature, and that only Sheriff Adam Bieber can review and authorize warrants.

"I will not make a special appearance because there is no jurisdiction over me," Retzlaff wrote.

Kussel asked Kaupie what he would like to do to compel Retzlaff's appearance, and the attorney said that none of the letters were filed through proper channels and court procedures so he requested denial of all requests from Retzlaff and the bench warrant.

"I think these documents are further illustrative in that they show quite clearly ... the defendant does not wish to accept or recognize the authority of Wisconsin courts, despite the fact that all of the arguments she has raised have been repeatedly addressed by the Wisconsin courts and Wisconsin Supreme Court and were rejected," Kaupie said. "The state has absolutely no confidence that this defendant will appear in court voluntarily regardless of the amount of money imposed on the warrant."

This is the third time Retzlaff was not at a scheduled court hearing. On Oct. 5, Retzlaff did not attend and informed the court she was ill. Kussel granted an adjournment to Oct. 26 but stipulated Retzlaff must attend in person. Retzlaff was not present on Oct. 26, prompting the judge to issue his first bench warrant.

Retzlaff is facing felony charges in Shawano County for fleeing and eluding officers and two counts of second-degree recklessly endangering safety, as well as a misdemeanor

count of resisting or obstructing an officer. She also faces charges through Menominee County for resisting and failing to stop.

On May 15, a Shawano County deputy heard on Menominee County radio traffic about a high-speed chase involving a vehicle registered to Retzlaff for failing to stop at a traffic light, according to the criminal complaint. The chase, starting in Keshena on state Highway 47-55, continued through the towns of Wescott and Richmond, where deputies twice laid out spike strips, and ended on state Highway 29 just west of County Road MMM.

Deputies with Shawano and Menominee counties initiated a "high-risk stop," according to the complaint, and shut down traffic on the highway's westbound lanes. A lieutenant advised Retzlaff to get out of the vehicle, but she allegedly said she was a "sovereign citizen" and would not exit. A deputy used a slim jim to open the passenger door, which is when Retzlaff allegedly tried to drive off, nearly hitting two Shawano County officials.

Eventually, the vehicle was stopped again, and deputies pulled Retzlaff out of her vehicle. According to the complaint, as she was being handcuffed and searched, she claimed the deputies were involved with covering up sex trafficking and said she was rescuing one of her employees from a sex trafficking house on "Crow Territory" in Menominee County.

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Retzlaff still MIA weeks after warrant issued

Law enforcement has made trips to her property without finding her

By **LEE PULASKI**

City Editor

The owner of Annie's Campground, accused of felony charges stemming from a police chase in May 2021, is still not in custody, despite a bench warrant issued by Shawano-Menominee County Circuit Court Judge William Kussel Jr.

The body-only warrant was issued for Ann Retzlaff on Nov. 23 after she skipped court. It was the second time Kussel had issued a bench warrant for Retzlaff — the first time took place Oct. 26, with Retzlaff being arrested the next day and immediately posting bond.

However, this time, Retzlaff has eluded law enforcement. According to Shawano County Sheriff's Department Chief Deputy George Lenzner, deputies have made multiple trips to Retzlaff's property to serve the warrant and take her into custody, but there has been no answer at the door. Because the warrant is body-only, law enforcement cannot enter any private property to look for her, but she is fair game if she is sighted in public.

"Around the holidays, we were informed that she was out of the area," Lenzner said. "The last time we were out there (at the campground), the gate was shut and locked. You can't even get in there."

Lenzner noted the sheriff's department has received reports that Retzlaff was somewhere in southern Wisconsin. Law enforcement has spoken with relatives, he added, in an attempt to locate her.

"Right now, she doesn't want to be found yet," Lenzner said. "All we can do is keep tracking and keep trying."

He added it's possible that Retzlaff might not be caught until the weather warms up and preparations begin for opening her campground, located west of Gresham, as it's possible she'd need to be available on the premises to run her business.

"Unfortunately, you can't go kicking down doors and stuff," Lenzner said.

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Lenzner, law enforcement has to either have the permission of the property owner or be able to prove to a judge that Retzlaff is in a location to get a different warrant allowing them to enter. Anyone allowing Retzlaff to stay on their property could be charged with harboring a fugitive, he noted.

"If we saw her (outside) and she ran in a house, we could run in after her," Retzlaff said. "It's not a search warrant where you could go inside a residence and search for someone. If you're locked up in your own property, we can't do much."

So far, the sheriff's department has had zero calls from the public indicating Retzlaff had been seen in public, but Lenzner is hopeful that members of the public will step up, as her face has been plastered on news media around Wisconsin.

Retzlaff is facing felony charges in Shawano County for fleeing and eluding officers and two counts of second-degree recklessly endangering safety, as well as a misdemeanor count of resisting or obstructing an officer. She also faces misdemeanor charges through Menominee County for resisting and failing to stop.

On May 15, a Shawano County deputy heard on Menominee County radio traffic about a high-speed chase involving a vehicle registered to Retzlaff for failing to stop at a traffic light, according to the criminal complaint. The chase, starting in Keshena on state Highway 47-55, continued through the towns of Wescott and Richmond, where deputies twice laid out spike strips, and ended on state Highway 29 just west of County Road MMM.

"Sometimes, when they don't want to be found, it's a waiting game. You have to wait until you catch them en route or in transit somewhere."

To enter private property, according to

Deputies with Shawano and Menominee counties initiated a "high-risk stop," according to the complaint, and shut down traffic on the highway's westbound lanes. A lieutenant advised Retzlaff to get out of the vehicle, but she allegedly said she was a "sovereign citizen" and would not exit. A deputy used a slim jim to open the passenger door, which is when Retzlaff allegedly tried to drive off, nearly hitting two Shawano County officials.

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Since then, Retzlaff has delayed court proceedings by first stating on two occasions that she had not found an attorney who was constitutionally sound, and Kussel agreed to give her additional time to do so, outside the usual 10-day period as Retzlaff claimed she was in the busy season for her business.

Then Retzlaff did not appear on Oct. 5, claiming she was ill, and Kussel granted a continuance but stipulated that she must appear in-person on Oct. 26. When she did not do so, Kussel declared her previous bonds forfeited and issued a bench warrant. Retzlaff paid the bonds for the new warrant but then missed court again on Nov. 23, claiming she felt she wasn't safe in the courtroom due to COVID-19.

Retzlaff has had other cases in Shawano County. In April, she had restraining orders against her for harassing Shawano County Supervisor Joe Miller and his wife, Jackie Miller. In November 2020, a guilty verdict due to a no contest plea was entered against Retzlaff for a case where she made a phone call and claimed she was a sheriff's deputy.

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New charges leveled against Retzlaff

Disorderly conduct, bail jumping added following her arrest in Wittenberg

By **LEE PULASKI**
City Editor

New charges were filed against Ann Retzlaff, the owner of Annie's Campground and a self-proclaimed "sovereign being of light," April 22 in Shawano-Menominee County Circuit Court.

Retzlaff is facing felony and misdemeanor counts of bail jumping for not appearing in court in November 2021. She's also facing two misdemeanor counts of disorderly conduct during her arrest April 20 in Wittenberg on body-only warrants and her subsequent processing in the Shawano County Jail.

This is on top of the original charges stemming from a police chase through two counties back in May 2021, which include fleeing and eluding officers and two counts of second-degree recklessly endangering safety, as well as a misdemeanor count of resisting or obstructing an officer. She also faces misdemeanor charges through Menominee County for resisting and failing to stop.

Marathon County Circuit Court Judge Mark Moran, who took over the case after Shawano-Menominee County Circuit Court Judge William Kussel Jr. recused himself, agreed to the defense motion of a \$1,000 signature bond, noting that Retzlaff is facing a high bond from her original charges — \$25,000 for the Shawano County charges and \$1,000 for the Menominee County charge. District Attorney Greg Parker had asked for a \$750 cash bond for the new charges.

Parker said the disorderly charges are a result from her alleged lack of cooperation with deputies who arrived at the Harvest restaurant in Wittenberg to arrest her on the body-only warrants.

"While they were taking the defendant into custody in the restaurant proper, she became loud, boisterous and used profanity," Parker said. "She continued to do that until they got her out to the squad and was uncooperative getting into the squad."

Once deputies got her to the jail, Retzlaff continued to be "terse" and uncooperative, according to Parker. He noted it took four or five officers at the



ANN RETZLAFF

Although the bond Parker requested was not granted, Moran agreed to the terms of Retzlaff not being allowed on the premises of the Harvest restaurant and not being allowed to leave the state, since one of the bail jumping charges is a felony.

"The court knows her history of non-appearance," Parker said.

Public defender Elizabeth Stockbridge represented Retzlaff at the April 22 hearing, noting it was only for that hearing, as Retzlaff does not qualify for a public defender. Stockbridge, who arrived late to the hearing, said that Retzlaff is "contesting in full" the new and original charges.

Stockbridge requested the signature bond, noting that the charges don't involve significant violence. The attorney also pointed out her family ties in the community and the fact that her business is about to open for a new season.

"Ms. Retzlaff has lived in the area for the last 12 years," Stockbridge said. "She has family in the area. Her three children reside only three miles away from her."

Stockbridge also noted Retzlaff's service in the U.S. Army from 1993 to 2004.

"She was deployed. She has an honorable discharge," she said. "She has significant reasons to remain in the community."

Stockbridge claimed Retzlaff is the only one able to get the campground up and running, and that she hasn't been able to do "basic stuff" to get additional staff to run the business.

Stockbridge alleged that Retzlaff has not been allowed by jail staff to contact her actual attorney regarding the case.

"She said the underlying charges relate to concerns she has in the community regarding child and other human sex trafficking," Stockbridge said.

Stockbridge said that Retzlaff wanted to address the bond amounts from her 2021 case, but Moran noted that he could not address them that day because, according to Marsy's Law, notice has to be given to victims about

jail to get her into a holding cell.

"One of them can be heard (on the body camera) saying, 'Stop resisting,'" Parker said. "She was making a lot of remarks."

a hearing. The April 22 hearing was only regarding the disorderly conduct and bail jumping charges.

The April 20 arrest was a little less complicated than Retzlaff's initial arrest May 15, 2021, when she led law enforcement on a chase through the Shawano area. However, Shawano County Chief Deputy George Lenzner said she was uncooperative and "not a happy camper" when deputies took her into custody this time.

"She was kind of surrounded," Lenzner said. "We sent a few officers out there, and she was out of her car. We've been watching for her and trying to find her over the weekend, and then we had the tip she was over at the restaurant into Wittenberg."

Lenzner said Retzlaff did not answer any questions after being taken into custody. However, the sheriff's department learned that she had been spotted in Virginia earlier this year, but because the body-only warrants were approved for Wisconsin and the surrounding states, Virginia's law enforcement could not act on them, according to Lenzner. He noted there was evidence that Retzlaff was alleg-

edly in Florida, as well.

Lenzner noted that it was good she was out of her vehicle at the time, as it made the arrest less hazardous to deputies.

"We didn't want to create a hazard for the public," he said. "It worked out good."

Retzlaff called the \$25,000 cash bond a "hardship" in another hearing on April 21. She said she has typically "gone south" in the winter months and come back to her business near Gresham in April when camping season begins, but the terms of her initial bond included not leaving the state because she is facing felony charges.

"It is normal for me to leave Wisconsin when it is wintertime," Retzlaff said.

She went on to claim that she runs "a multi-million-dollar business" and that she can't delegate everything.

"I have to be here," Retzlaff said, later claiming she's the only full-time worker in her business. "There is no flight risk."

The new and original charges are scheduled for a preliminary hearing at 1:45 p.m. May 2.

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Motion to reduce Retzlaff's bond denied

Defendant still without an attorney; DA questions her mental competency

By **LEE PULASKI**
City Editor

An effort by Ann Retzlaff to lower the \$25,000 bond she's currently in jail on was denied May 2, and a planned preliminary hearing was delayed after Retzlaff revealed she was, once again, without an attorney present.

Retzlaff continued to rail against the court, "objecting to all charges against me," claiming she's only making a "special appearance" and that she is appearing "under duress." After an arrest on May 15, 2021, following a high-speed chase, Retzlaff was charged in Shawano-Menominee County Circuit Court with fleeing and eluding officers and two counts of second-degree recklessly endangering safety, as well as a misdemeanor count of resisting or obstructing an officer. She also faces misdemeanor charges through Menominee County for resisting and failing to stop.

Retzlaff was arrested again April 20 in Wittenberg after skipping two court appearances that ultimately

resulted in body-only warrants being issued. Two counts of disorderly conduct and two counts of bail jumping were added to the charges.

Retzlaff claimed she has been unable to secure legal counsel while she is incarcerated in the Shawano County Jail.

"I'm in here," Retzlaff said. "I don't have access to a secure line. I can't make 1-800 numbers out, and I'm not able to use the 411 information line."

Retzlaff, who owns a campground near Gresham, also claimed she does not have the money to pay the cash bond currently facing her, pointing out that she'd already paid \$7,500 in bonds when she was arrested the first time and arrested again in October 2021 after she first missed a court appearance.

"I stash away a little bit of money in the winter so I can pay the bills," Retzlaff said. "The revenue stops about the middle of October, and it doesn't start again until springtime. This year, we're delayed because of the weather."

She added that she also had to pay a \$20,000 mortgage payment April 1, further contributing to her lack of funds.

District Attorney Greg Parker had planned to call deputies to testify at the preliminary hearing, both regarding the initial arrest on state Highway 29 west of Shawano and her most recent arrest at the Harvest restaurant in Wittenberg, but that was delayed due to Retzlaff not having an attorney to speak for her.

"I've looked at all of the information in both of these cases," Parker said. "I've looked at the body cameras for the arrest back in May 2021. I've reviewed a phone call the defendant had with the Menominee County Sheriff's Department with the fleeing and obstructing an officer that turned into an eluding in Shawano County."

Parker said he was not making a motion for it, but he suggested that the issue of Retzlaff's competency might be explored.

"None of this is making sense," Parker said. "I'm not sure if the de-

fendant is understanding things, or if she's just obstinate."

Parker was opposed to lowering Retzlaff's bond amount, noting that his office had advocated that the bond originally be between \$50,000 and \$75,000, due to the defendant's previous actions of leaving the state for West Virginia and Florida.

Marathon County Circuit Court Judge Mark Moran, who took on the case after Shawano-Menominee County Circuit Court Judge William Kussel recused himself earlier this year, said he was not convinced that Retzlaff would remain in the state if he lowered the bond amount.

"You don't recognize that this court has any jurisdictional situation over you," Moran said. "I'm struggling with the idea of, 'Will you come back to court?'"

A status conference on Retzlaff's case is scheduled for 11 a.m. May 9 in Branch 2 at the Shawano County Courthouse.

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Retzlaff says charges are 'fraud' in hearing

Defendant fails to get requested bond hearing due to Marsy's Law

By LEE PULASKI
City Editor

Ann Retzlaff continued to be defiant in court May 9, claiming the staff at the Shawano County Jail continued to hamper her ability to retain counsel to represent her, as well as continuing to claim the court had no jurisdiction over her and that she was trying to be silenced.

Retzlaff is facing felony charges dating back to May 2021 of fleeing and eluding officers and two counts of second-degree recklessly endangering safety, as well as a misdemeanor count of resisting or obstructing an officer. She also faces misdemeanor charges through Menominee County for resisting and failing to stop. Bail jumping and disorderly conduct charges were added in April after she missed two court appearances in late 2021, and deputies arrested her in Wittenberg.

Once again claiming she was making "a special appearance under duress" from the jail, Retzlaff told Marathon County Circuit Court Judge Mark Moran during a status conference, when asked if she had found an attorney, that she "had not been afforded the opportunity" while being held on a \$25,000 bond from Shawano County and a \$1,000 bond from Menominee County.

"The deputy went and told the desk sergeant, to no success," Retzlaff said. "I would like to have that right. I will not waive any of my rights."

According to Ethan Schmidt, Shawano County clerk of courts, she has been allowed to use a telephone and the internet. He said he emailed the jail to "remedy the situation" and learned she had made 226 calls in her time in jail as of May 5, as well as that she had the funds in her account to make calls.

"Some calls did not go through, but looking at the records the jail

**ANN RETZLAFF**

has, the majority of the calls have gone through," Schmidt said. "Their policy states they need to allow access to a phone. The phone is in her housing unit, and she has been making calls. They have not had any requests in writing for her to use a different phone due to the inability to contact an attorney."

Retzlaff continued to claim that the whole case should have been dropped due a lawsuit filed in federal court against Shawano-Menominee County Circuit Court Judge William Kussel Jr., who has recused himself from the case, along with District Attorney Greg Parker and Corporation Counsel Larenda Maulson.

"It's irrelevant," Retzlaff said. "It's nonsense that this case is even moving. It's a federal lawsuit, and Greg Parker's name is on that lawsuit. So why is he even sitting at the desk today?"

Moran pointed out that there can be cases running simultaneously at the state and federal levels.

"They're not mutually exclusive, ma'am," he said.

Retzlaff claimed she couldn't make a call to talk with an attorney because the jail calls cost her 20 cents per minute. She claimed it would be easier if her bond could be reduced so she could make her calls from home and work, which wouldn't cost her extra.

"It takes several days, and you're on the phone all the time," Retzlaff said. "I am not made of money. I have to have people drive money here so I can make phone calls. If I were to do this from my home office, this would cost me nothing."

She also claimed she has called friends that include a retired judge

and a retired lawyer, but because the caller ID indicates her call is coming from the jail, her calls are rejected.

Retzlaff wanted to discuss a bond modification at the status conference, but Moran pointed out that there had been no notice posted about a bond hearing as required under Marsy's Law — which sent the defendant into a rambling tirade, claiming that Marsy's Law did not apply and that the court was a "corporation."

"The court has no jurisdiction to determine its own jurisdiction," Retzlaff said. "I am not a federal citizen of the District of Columbia. I am a state national and claim my nationality as such."

Moran responded that Retzlaff's statement makes it clear that the current bond amount is reasonable, as she indicates she does not respect the court's authority.

Retzlaff claimed that the "real crime" was supposed sex trafficking going on in the area. She said that she "inadvertently" came across a sex trafficking house in Menominee County and had rescued somebody from that place when law enforcement tried to pull her over.

"This is why all these charges are being brought up," Retzlaff said. "They are trying to target me and trying to silence me. What is Shawano County doing about all the sex trafficking and child trafficking and drug trafficking in Shawano County? That is the real crime! Not me!"

Retzlaff continued to portray her as a victim of a corrupt system who should be freed.

"I am just a traveler going from point A to point B," Retzlaff said. "All of these traffic violations are fraud."

The bond hearing and a new status conference is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. May 19.

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CORRECTIONS

Accuracy is important to the Shawano Leader, and it wants to correct mistakes promptly. Call errors to our attention by phone at 715-526-2121, ext. 7018

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Judge reduces Retzlaff's cash bond to \$15,000

Campground owner files suit against 2 involved in her May 2021 arrest

By **LEE PULASKI**

City Editor

Ann Retzlaff still claims her bond is too high after it was reduced from \$25,000 to \$15,000 on May 19, even as she filed federal lawsuits against the deputies involved in her arrest last year.

Retzlaff was able to garner some sympathy from Marathon County Circuit Court Judge Mark Moran after claiming she was the only caregiver for her father, who is “direly ill” with ALS. But Moran flatly denied her request to make the cash bond a signature bond as he noted her callous disregard for the court system and her history of skipping court appearances.

“I do that because I’m considering your situation,” Moran said. “I still have grave concerns about you appearing in court.”

Retzlaff said she could not afford to pay the \$15,000 cash bond, noting she has already paid \$7,500, which was forfeited when she missed two court appearances in October and November 2021. She claimed she would not be a flight risk due to her business, Annie’s Campground, being in operation for the summer, and she said she has lived in the area for 12 years.

“I have asked for mercy,” Retzlaff said. “The court is supposed to have mercy, truth and justice to we, the people. I have not seen that.”

District Attorney Greg Parker was opposed to any reduction in bond, noting that she has past bond forfeitures. He noted that the crimes she’s facing carry a sentence of 24 years and more than \$70,000 in fines.

“Under those circumstances, I think the bail bond reduction should be denied,” Parker said.

Retzlaff is facing felony charges in Shawano-Menominee County Circuit Court dating back to May 2021 of fleeing and eluding officers and two counts of second-degree recklessly endangering safety, as well as a misdemeanor count of resisting or obstructing an officer. She also faces misdemeanor charges through Menominee County for resisting and

failing to stop. Bail jumping and disorderly conduct charges were added in April after she missed two court appearances in late 2021, and deputies arrested her in Wittenberg.

Retzlaff did not have counsel once again and said that, for the time being, she would represent herself in the local case. She has an attorney involved with her federal lawsuits. She claimed her efforts to find an attorney in Wisconsin have been hampered by the kiosk in her cell block at the jail acting up for three days.

“It’s difficult to make any calls out,” Retzlaff said.

Moran offered Retzlaff the option to represent herself, noting that the case has been in the system for a year already, and she has not even reached the stage of a preliminary hearing due to the delays while she claims she’s been seeking an attorney.

“I don’t want this to go on forever, so you may have to represent yourself,” Moran said.

After several minutes of arguing that she should be provided legal assistance, Retzlaff agreed to managing her own defense.

Retzlaff also claimed at the hearing that she has been on a hunger strike since she had been jailed in late April.

“I have not taken any food,” she said.

Retzlaff filed two suits in federal court May 16 against Lt. Kurt Kitzman with the Shawano County Sheriff’s Department and Deputy Justin Hoffman with the Menominee County Sheriff’s Department. She is claiming a number of civil rights violations, including conspiracy for cover-up of human trafficking, kidnapping, police brutality, assault with a deadly weapon and violation of her Second, Fourth and Fifth Amendment rights under the U.S. Constitution.

“My freedom of speech has been impaired,” Retzlaff said at the May 19 hearing. “My freedom of travel has been impaired.”

Retzlaff claims that, on May 15, 2021, the day of the chase through Shawano and Menominee counties, she had received a call from one of

her employees, asking her to pick up the employee at a house in Menominee County. The employee claimed she was being trafficked, Retzlaff said. The suit further claims Retzlaff “got too close to the trafficked house” and was stopped by Hoffman.

There has been no response to the two suits so far.

Retzlaff claims her circuit court case should have been dropped due a lawsuit filed in federal court against Shawano-Menominee County Circuit Court Judge William Kussel Jr., who has recused himself from the case, along with District Attorney Greg Parker and Corporation Counsel Larenda Maulson.

“I don’t know how those charges can stand,” Retzlaff said. “I was in constant contact with law enforcement.”

The criminal complaint in the circuit court shows that a Shawano County deputy heard on Menominee County radio traffic about a high-speed chase involving a vehicle registered to Retzlaff for failing to stop at a traffic light, according to the criminal complaint. The chase, starting in Keshena on state Highway 47-55, continued through the towns of Wescott and Richmond, where deputies twice laid out spike strips, and ended on state Highway 29 just west of County Road MMM.

Deputies with Shawano and Menominee counties initiated a “high-risk stop,” according to the complaint, and shut down traffic on the highway’s westbound lanes. A lieutenant advised Retzlaff to get out of the vehicle, but she allegedly said she was a “sovereign citizen” and would not exit. A deputy used a slim jim to open the passenger door, which is when Retzlaff allegedly tried to drive off, nearly hitting two Shawano County officials.

Eventually, the vehicle was stopped again, and deputies pulled Retzlaff out of her vehicle. According to the complaint, as she was being handcuffed and searched, she claimed the deputies were involved with covering up sex trafficking.

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Judge: There's enough evidence to bind Retzlaff

Officers called upon to testify regarding police chase, recent arrest at Wittenberg restaurant

By **LEE PULASKI**

City Editor

Marathon County Circuit Court Judge Mark Moran ruled May 31 that the Shawano County district attorney had enough evidence to bind Ann Retzlaff over on felony charges from a police chase in 2021 and her arrest in 2022 on a bench warrant when she did not appear in court.

Retzlaff has been charged with fleeing and eluding officers and two counts of second-degree recklessly endangering safety, as well as a misdemeanor count of resisting or obstructing an officer stemming from the police chase. She also faces misdemeanor charges through Menominee County for resisting and failing to stop.

Retzlaff was arrested April 20 in Wittenberg and charged with felony and misdemeanor counts of bail jumping for not appearing in court in November 2021. She's also facing two misdemeanor counts of disorderly conduct for her reported behavior during her arrest.

Alan Leiser, who is currently with the Crivitz Police Department but was a Shawano County sheriff's deputy in May 2021, testified that Retzlaff did not try to pull over even as several law enforcement vehicles were chasing her with lights and sirens, only pulling over on state Highway 29 after officials twice deployed spike strips that deflated her tires. He testified seeing that one of his colleagues had to jump out of the way after she drove away during the stop following another deputy using a Slim Jim to open the passenger door of Retzlaff's black Dodge Ram.

Leiser said there were six deputies between Shawano and Menominee counties who were involved in pursuing and detaining her.

"She kept claiming she was a sovereign citizen, and she was claiming that we were violating her rights," Leiser said.

Kurt Kitzman, a former sheriff's



Ann Retzlaff walks into Branch 2 of the Shawano County Courthouse on May 31 for her preliminary hearing on charges stemming from a May 2021 police chase and another arrest on April 20 of this year on a bench warrant.

LEE PULASKI | NEW MEDIA

lieutenant who recently became the chief of the Pulaski Police Department, testified he tried to talk to Retzlaff during the stop on Highway 29, but that she wasn't being rational. He said he had to jump away from her vehicle when it started moving away.

"My right shoulder was probably touching the vehicle," Kitzman said. "I had to jump out and away from the vehicle."

Deputy Matt Higgins, one of the arresting officers in April, testified that there were only a few customers in the Wittenberg restaurant when he entered to arrest Retzlaff. When she was asked to stand up and be taken into custody, Higgins said she became extremely verbal and confrontational. As deputies were taking her outside, Higgins said, Retzlaff called one a

"(expletive deleted) prick."

Retzlaff did not have any witnesses to testify on her behalf, claiming she did not know she need to subpoena them to be in the courtroom. She also tried to argue that law enforcement did not have any right to pull her over because she is not a "commercial" driver, but Moran denied her objections and requests to drop charges.

Retzlaff filed a motion on May 25 for another bond hearing, hoping to reduce the \$15,000 bond she currently faces, but that has not yet been scheduled. She is currently in the Shawano County Jail.

Moran said the next step would be an arraignment, at which time Retzlaff will get to enter her plea.

lpulaski@newmedia-wi.com

Retzlaff demands trial by jury in her case

Judge interprets that as not guilty plea

By **LEE PULASKI**
City Editor

Ann Retzlaff demanded a “trial by jury” at an arraignment June 13 in Shawano-Menominee County Circuit Court while continuing to rail against the court system and begging for her already-reduced cash bond to be reduced even more.

Marathon County Circuit Court Judge Mark Moran, who is presiding over the case after Shawano County Judge William Kussel Jr. recused himself, said he would take Retzlaff’s call for a trial by jury to be a not guilty plea on the charges against her from two separate cases.

Retzlaff is facing felony and misdemeanor counts of bail jumping for not appearing in court in November 2021. The owner of Annie’s Campground near Gresham is also facing two misdemeanor counts of disorderly conduct during her arrest April 20 in Wittenberg on body-only warrants and her subsequent



ANN RETZLAFF

processing in the Shawano County Jail.

This is on top of the original charges stemming from a police chase through two counties back in May 2021, which include fleeing and eluding officers and two counts of second-degree recklessly endangering safety, as well as a misdemeanor count of resisting or obstructing an officer. She also faces misdemeanor charges through Menominee County for resisting and failing to stop.

Retzlaff, who is currently representing herself, said that she had filled an “affidavit of truth” one week after she’d initially released from jail May 17, 2021, on the charges from the chase that had asked to dismiss all charges then.

“I am the one who alerted 9-1-1, and I’m the one who activated my 9-1-1 emergency system on my truck,” Retzlaff said.

Retzlaff has claimed that she had traveled to the Menominee Reserva-

tion to rescue a woman who was her employee and was allegedly being sex trafficked from a home there.

“I’m the one who called law enforcement to be there,” Retzlaff said.

Retzlaff has also claimed she is not subject to the laws of the state of Wisconsin, deeming them to be by-laws of a corporation that she claims has been defunct for years.

“I am a sovereign being of light. I am a state national,” Retzlaff said. “These are corporate bylaws for corporations. I am not a corporation. I have been saying this since May of 2021, over a year past the incident. I am asking for truth and justice and, in this case, mercy.”

Retzlaff disputed media reports that said the original chase was a high-speed chase.

“If you review the law enforcement statements, they have me going at or under the posted speed limit, which never went above 55,” Retzlaff said. “I was never fleeing the officer because I was in constant contact.”

Retzlaff claimed the location that she picked up her employee from was a “known, violent criminal activity house” and that the employee

had escaped.

“I was helping someone,” she said. “That is not a crime to help someone.”

Moran recommended that Retzlaff continue to try and get an attorney to represent her, even though she is unable to post her \$15,000 cash bond.

“I think you would benefit from that assistance,” Moran said.

Retzlaff repeated her claim that she could not pay that amount, as she has already paid bond on her initial arrest and her second arrest when she failed to make a court appearance in October 2021. She said a reduced bond would allow her to get out and focus on finding representation for the case.

“It is a severe financial hardship for me,” Retzlaff said. “It is excessive. Excessive fines and bails should not be put upon our Wisconsinites.”

She said she has asked the jail to allow her to make copies of documents for court, but she has been told that “everyone is busy.”

“That is the common claim in this lovely gestapo,” Retzlaff said.

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“I am a sovereign being of light. I am a state national. These are corporate bylaws for corporations. I am not a corporation.”

ANN RETZLAFF

OBITUARIES

John F. Knoke Sr.

John F. Knoke Sr., 90, of Waupaca, passed away peacefully surrounded by his family on Monday, June 6, 2022, at ThedaCare Regional Medical Center in Appleton. He was born July 3, 1931, in Shawano, son of Herman and Lucy (Lotharius) Knoke. When John was only 12 years old, he came by train to Waupaca for the first time to work on a potato farm east of town, which is when he first came to love the area.

John served in the U.S. Marine Corps from Dec. 11, 1951, until he was honorably discharged on Dec. 2, 1953, where he was stationed stateside in Florida during the Korean War. On May 29, 1954, he married Illa M. Hagen in Minneapo-



lis, and together through the years they raised six children and were blessed with 14 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

John worked for the Soo Line for 13 years and then began his career for the Waupaca Post Office where he would retire from. He was a volunteer at St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church, was an avid Lake-man fan, enjoyed playing pool and cards and having coffee with his friends at Hardee’s. His farm and family were his greatest joy, and John will be dearly missed by all of his loving family and friends.

John is survived by his wife of 68

years, Illa Knoke, of Waupaca; five children, Terry Knoke, of Waupaca, Sue (Terry) Molder, of Waupaca, John (LuAnn) Knoke Jr., of Stevens Point, Andy (Johnna) Knoke, of Ripon and Pete (Jenny) Knoke, of Pewaukee; 14 grandchildren, Jerome Miller, Ryan (significant other Claire Ellie) Miller, Jaisy Peskie, Jace (Nikki) Peskie, Devyn (Adam) Mollica, Mitchell (Ashley) Molder, Karen Knoke, Stevie Knoke, Sophia Knoke, Cecelia Knoke, Brandon Knoke, Nicholas Knoke, Thomas Knoke and Alexandra Knoke; seven great-grandchildren; two brothers, Eugene Knoke and Dan (Carla) Knoke; two sisters, Alice Bruss and Anita Knoke; a brother-in-law, William “Billy” Moede; numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Herman and Lucy Knoke; a daughter, Peggy Peskie; a great-grandson, Damian Miller; and five siblings, James Knoke, Lorraine Janssen, Marian Moede, Herman Knoke Jr. and Cecile Bruss.

A graveside service for John will be on Sunday, June 12, 2022, at 2 p.m. at St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Cemetery in Waupaca, followed by full military honors to be performed. Deacon Bob Precourt will officiate.

In lieu of flowers, a memorial is being established in John’s name.

The Holly Funeral Home of Waupaca is assisting the family with arrangements.

Holly Funeral Home, 526 S. Main St., Waupaca. www.hollyfuneral-home.com