

Convicted ex-cop: 'I've done wrong'

By Alice Collins
staff writer

Former Franklin police officer Ben David went openly in court Wednesday after learning he would have to spend at least 30 days in jail.

"I apologize for everything that has happened," he told Judge Margaret Schaeffer. "I have done wrong" to the community, his family and his fellow police officers, he said.

David's arrest last March on charges including ticket fixing, obstruction of justice and selling police computer information triggered an FBI investigation into the unlawful

sale of the computer information by other police officers in Oakland County.

David's sentencing in 47th District Court in Farmington followed last month's guilty pleas to destroying evidence in a Franklin drug case and selling police computer information while moonlighting for a private investigator.

David, an eight-year police veteran who lives in West Bloomfield, began cooperating with the ongoing police investigation soon after his arrest last March. In exchange for that cooperation and the guilty pleas, 14 other counts against him were dismissed.

For reasons of security, the judge said he will be segregated from other prisoners in the jail. He was allowed to remain free during the Thanksgiving weekend and ordered to report to the jail today to begin his sentence.

When he walked into the courthouse Wednesday, David still had hopes of avoiding a jail sentence.

BUT MINUTES BEFORE delivering the sentence in open court, Schaeffer told Sabotta and assistant prosecutor James Halushka in her chambers how she would rule. Sabotta passed it on to David. "I tell everybody before," said Sabotta. "I don't like surprises."

David, knowing what was coming, walked into Schaeffer's courtroom with his head down and sat down at the defense table. He kept his face covered with his hand and didn't automatically stand up when the judge came in and took her seat — a regular practice in court. Sabotta took him by the arm and pulled him to his feet.

After the court proceedings, Halushka said he was satisfied with the sentence but "shocked" that Judge Schaeffer didn't follow the recommendation of the probation department. "Most judges would have given the full suspended sentence. They gave her a way out and she decided not to take it."

Halushka said he was pleased that

David "will never work as a police officer again. As an officer, he betrayed the public trust, he destroyed cocaine in a drug case and he's admitted to selling his badge for a measly \$100."

SABOTTA WASN'T surprised by the judge's sentence. "She wanted to send a message to people who work for the public."

"All things considered, I think he did OK," Sabotta said of David.

David was a respected Franklin police detective sergeant before the charges were leveled against him. He was suspended, then officially resigned prior to entering the guilty pleas.

The Franklin case, which led to the charge of willful neglect of duty against David, involved his destruction of cocaine held as evidence in a drug case against the 17-year-old son of a prominent Franklin resident.

In the selling of police information, he admitted to unlawfully using the restricted Law Enforcement Information Network computer terminal at the Farmington Hills Police Department to obtain information for private purposes and selling it for a total of \$400.

Federal authorities have declined comment on the FBI investigation of other officers in the sale of police information. But Sabotta said earlier that David had turned over the names of several Oakland County police officers and one civilian.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

On his way to the courthouse is former Franklin police officer Ben David (left) and his attorney. David was found guilty of destroying evidence and selling police computer information.

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