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Warrant alleges cover-up

Springfield officials freed

Faimon A. Roberts

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The mayor and police chief of Springfield attempted to cover up a driving while intoxicated case, according to arrest warrants filed by the state Office of the Inspector General.

Mayor Charles E. Martin and Police Chief James Jones were arrested Tuesday and booked into the Livingston Parish Detention Center with obstruction of justice, malfeasance in office, injuring public records and conspiracy, a sheriff's spokesman confirmed.

Both were released on bond later Tuesday, the spokesman said. Jones was back working Wednesday, he said.

Martin did not return calls seeking comment.

Reached by phone, Chief Jones refused to comment on the allegations on the advice of his attorney, but said he would not take any leave or resign.

"I ain't going nowhere," he said. "I am not planning on resigning."

The case will be referred to the state Attorney General's Office, said Scott Perrilloux, district attorney.

The criminal counts stemmed from an April 10 incident in which Springfield Police Officer Ryan Weaver arrested a Tyra Jones, of Hammond, on suspicion of driving while intoxicated, the warrant says.

Tyra Jones had a blood-alcohol level allegedly more than twice the legal limit, the warrant states.

Tyra Jones was booked into the Detention Center with DWI and reckless operation of a motor vehicle, the warrant alleges.

After the arrest, Martin and Chief Jones attempted to prevent the arrest from being prosecuted, according to the warrant.

The two officials admitted concealing the arrest of Tyra Jones during an interview with investigators from the Office of the Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the warrant states.

Martin admitted to illegally attempting to hide the arrest after receiving phone calls from two good friends about the incident, the warrant states.

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Jones told investigators he had hidden Tyra Jones' DWI arrest report after conferring with Martin, according to the warrant.

The warrant alleges that Martin asked Weaver if he would have a problem if Martin "took care of his friend" and reduced "the DWI to a reckless operation citation," the warrant says.

The Inspector General's Office also has a recording of Jones telling Weaver that he did not intend to submit the DWI report to Perrilloux for prosecution, the warrant says.

"What are they gonna do? ... how are they gonna dispute that?" the warrant quotes Jones as saying on the recording.

Chief Jones also told Weaver that the plan was legal because the mayor had the right to amend misdemeanor DWI offenses.

Louisiana law prohibits Mayors' Courts from judging DWI cases, the warrant says.

Tyra Jones was issued a citation for reckless operation and had her license returned by Chief Jones approximately a week after she was arrested, according to the warrant.

"There were two angles in this case," Louisiana Inspector General Stephen Street said. "Public corruption and public safety.

"The officer made a textbook DWI arrest, and they came in there and changed it," he said.

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1) Comment by redavaw1 - July 21, 2011 09:16:26AM

It sucks that people try to hide something as serious as a DWI. The rest of the public has to take the chance driving on the roads with people that have "friends" in high places. That is why our insurance is so freakin high. This is one of the problem with families today. Parents are suppose to set good examples for their kids. When they screw up, they should face the music and not have their "daddy" get them out of it. That is probably why she has a drinking problem to begin with. POOR PARENTING! It's not like Livingston Parish has the most severe DWI penalties out there.... Sentenance them to the MAX!

2) Comment by Penny - July 21, 2011 07:39:54AM

Same thing happened with Cajun Injector a few years back, and nothing came of it. Cops just drove him home. Thanks for mentioning the two investigative arms.

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