

Town Council's Hall charged with sexual battery

By Stephen Faleski
Staff Writer

Smithfield Town Councilman Wayne Hall has been charged with groping a woman.

According to a Nov. 7 town news release, Hall faces one count of sexual battery and another count of assault and battery, both Class 1 misdemeanors, each punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to a year in jail.

Hall is further barred from coming within 500 feet of the alleged victim, her home, place of work or vehicles, per an emergency protective order.

The protective order alleges Hall, a formerly longtime friend of

the alleged victim, to have entered her Isle of Wight County home on Nov. 3 “under the ruse of seeing what she had done with the house she built” and immediately began grabbing, kissing and groping her.

The woman, in a handwritten criminal complaint, alleges Hall held her against her will “while he kissed me and felt my breasts” and “tried to go under my shirt” for “several minutes.”

“During that time, he put his tongue in my mouth and was



Hall

• See **COUNCILMAN**, p. 7

Councilman

• Continued from p. 1

rubbing my body,” the complaint alleges.

Hall was arrested and processed at the Smithfield Police Department. He appeared via video conference before a magistrate and was released on a \$1,000 unsecured bail.

According to Smithfield Police Lt. William Wooley, the department did not take part in the investigation and was responsible only for taking Hall into custody. The complainant “took out her own warrants,” Wooley told The Smithfield Times.

Hall, himself a former investigator with the Isle of Wight County Sheriff's

Office, first ran for his Town Council seat in 2018 and was reelected to a second four-year term in 2022.

The arrest marks the second time in less than a month that a member of Smithfield's Town Council has been charged with a misdemeanor crime. Councilwoman Renee Rountree, a candidate for the Smithfield-centric District 1 seat on Isle of Wight's Board of Supervisors, was also charged last month with receiving stolen property, another Class 1 misdemeanor, after police allegedly discovered campaign signs of opponent Chris Torre in

the crawlspace of Rountree's home.

Hall did not immediately respond to The Smithfield Times' request for comments.

Smithfield Mayor Steve Bowman issued the following statement:

“In this country, a person is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. That being said, I recognize that these are serious charges. As members of the Smithfield Town Council, we are obligated to lead in a manner that instills confidence in our constituency. I will continue to strive to do just that.”



Smithfield police say they confiscated two signs like this one from a crawl space at the home of a political rival, Town Councilwoman Renee Rountree.

Council member charged in theft case

By Stephen Faleski
Staff Writer

A Smithfield Town Council member who is running for a seat on Isle of Wight County's Board of Supervisors has been charged criminally in connection with the theft of her opponent's campaign signs.



Rountree

Councilwoman Renee Rountree faces a charge of receiving stolen

• See SIGNS, p. 4

Signs

• Continued from p. 1

goods, while her son-in-law, Blacksburg resident and former Virginia Tech football player Jesse Hanson, has been charged with larceny after security video showed a man remove a sign on North Church Street, police said. Both charges are Class 1 misdemeanors, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to a year in jail.

Rountree was the only candidate to submit paperwork by June 20 to get her name on the ballot for the Smithfield-centric District 1 supervisor seat. Chris Torre, a retired real estate developer, announced on Sept. 19 he would mount a last-minute write-in campaign for the District 1 seat.

By Sept. 27, a number of yard signs supporting Torre could be seen throughout the town. By Oct. 2, Torre and his campaign volunteers noticed some of the signs they'd placed had gone missing.

"One sign was being stolen from its location over and over again," Torre told The Smithfield Times. "Every time the team replaced the missing one with another sign, that one got stolen too."

Signs Torre placed in his front yard on Sept. 27 were taken sometime during the evening or night of Oct. 2. Another placed at the entrance to Smithfield's Cypress Creek community alongside signs for several other candidates also went missing sometime prior to 11:23 a.m. on Oct. 3, according to Leah Walker, one of Torre's campaign volunteers.

The Cypress Creek yard sign was replaced by the campaign on Oct. 4 and taken again sometime prior to 10:45 a.m. on Oct. 8, Walker said, noting that only Torre's sign and none of the others placed at the subdivision's entrance had been disturbed.

Walker said the team searched the internet for a solution and came up with the idea to attach AirTags, a button-sized tracking device made by Apple, to some of the signs in hopes of catching the culprits, and provided the tracking info to police.

According to an Oct. 12 town news release, police traced signs stolen from two separate locations to the 400 block of Royal Dornoch in Cypress Creek, where Rountree lives.

"The Town of Smithfield and the Smithfield Police Department will continue to fully cooperate with the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office in this matter," the press release stated.

Rountree, on the same day of the press release, issued the following statement:

"Dear friends, neighbors, and supporters: Please know that I have fully cooperated with the Smithfield Police Department's investigation of alleged missing

signs of the Chris Torre write-in campaign. I maintain my innocence in this matter, but on advice of my counsel will not make any further statements at this time. While this situation is unfortunate for our community, it does not distract me from my efforts to serve Smithfield and ultimately the citizens of Isle of Wight County. I would like to thank everyone for their continued support as I refute these allegations made against me and as (sic) my family."

Smithfield Mayor Steve Bowman, who in the Times' Oct. 4 edition endorsed Rountree's bid for supervisor in a letter to the editor, declined to comment on the charge she now faces.

The footage showing a man walking away with a Chris Torre sign placed on North Church Street near Cure coffee shop came from a video camera mounted outside the Isle of Wight County Museum, according to a police report by Lt. J. Eric Phillips.

Phillips' report states he made contact Oct. 9 with Rountree's husband, who granted police permission to search the family's residence for the missing signs and called his wife, whom he then put on speakerphone to talk with Phillips. She allegedly told Phillips that Hanson had taken the signs "as a prank."

Rountree then allegedly told Phillips over the phone that she'd planned to "put them behind the treasurer's office" where campaign signs removed from public right-of-ways are typically taken before they're returned to candidates, but "didn't have time."

Phillips called Hanson the same day. He allegedly admitted to taking two signs.

Rountree, according to Phillips' report, allegedly told Torre in a phone conversation that she'd seen several of his signs in the back of her son-in-law's pickup truck, had placed them in her garage "for safekeeping" and "intended to return them." Torre also told the Times that Rountree had used the phrase "for safekeeping" when describing his conversation with her. Phillips' report, however, states he found the signs "just inside the crawl space access door" in the home's foundation.

Hanson is a senior and medically retired offensive lineman at Virginia Tech. The college, on Oct. 13, said it would be addressing the matter "with internal disciplinary measures and appropriate action."

Travis Wells, a spokesman for Virginia Tech's athletics department, said Hanson had been "helping out with the team" in a non-playing capacity this semester, but is "currently on a leave from team activities."

Rountree contacted po-

lice herself on Oct. 12 and, according to Phillips, told him and Chief Alonzo Howell that she would be available at 3:30 p.m. that day at her home for an officer to serve her with her warrant.

Commonwealth's Attorney Georgette Phillips told the Times on Oct. 13 that charging Rountree and her son-in-law was a decision made by police, not her office.

Police "presented us with a set of facts and we advised what potential charges were appropriate

given the evidence presented," Phillips said. "My office did not make the decision to charge any individual."

Virginia law obligates commonwealth's attorneys to prosecute felonies but gives discretion in whether to assign a prosecutor to argue a misdemeanor case.

"We may prosecute a misdemeanor larceny offense pursuant to a request from either the law enforcement officer or the victim," Phillips said.

STALLINGS & ASSOCIATES, P.C.

Specializing in
SMALL BUSINESS & INDIVIDUAL TAXATION

T. Craig Stallings, CPA

210 Main St., Smithfield, VA 23430
(757) 365-0200 phone
(757) 365-0111 fax
craig@stallingsandassociates.com

Leaf & Filter GUTTER PROTECTION **CLOG-FREE GUTTERS FOREVER**

BEFORE LeafFilter AFTER LeafFilter

THE NATION'S #1 GUTTER GUARD

EXCLUSIVE LIMITED TIME OFFER!

15% OFF YOUR ENTIRE PURCHASE
+ 10% OFF SENIORS & MILITARY!
+ 0% APR FOR 24 MONTHS**

USA **Promo Code: 285**

FREE GUTTER ALIGNMENT + FREE GUTTER CLEANING*

CALL US TODAY FOR A FREE ESTIMATE **1-877-614-6667**

Mon-Thurs: 8am-11pm, Fri-Sat: 8am-5pm, Sun: 2pm-8pm EST A COMPANY OF LEAFHOME

**Wells Fargo Home Projects credit card is issued by Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., an Equal Housing Lender. Special terms for 24 mo. apply to qualifying purchases of \$1,000 or more with approved credit. Minimum monthly payments will not pay off balance before end of promotional period. APR for new purchases is 23.99%. Effective - 01/01/2023 - subject to change. Call 1-800-431-5921 for complete details. The leading consumer reporting agency conducted a 16 month outdoor test of gutter guards in 2010 and recognized LeafFilter as the "#1 rated professionally installed gutter guard system in America." *For those who qualify. One coupon per household. No obligation estimate valid for 1 year. Offer valid at time of estimate only. See Representative for full warranty details. Manufactured in Pawtucket, Michigan and processed at LMT/Mercer Group in Ohio, AR #036620922, CA #1039795, CT #HIC 0649005, FL #CBC056676, IA #IC12730, ID #RCE 51604, LA #505944, MA #17647, MD #MHIC188329, MI # 2102312986, #23020022, #23200403, #210012946, MN #R731864, NY #226192, ND #7304, NE #50145-22, NJ #13VH0995300, NM #408693, NV #008690, NH #19114, H-52228, OR #218204, PA #PA09383, RI #GC-41354, TN #7656, UT #107933658-5501, VA #2705169445, WA #LEAFNRW822Z, WV #0056912.

Call today and receive a FREE SHOWER PACKAGE PLUS \$1600 OFF

SAFE STEP WALK-IN TUB

1-877-591-9950

With purchase of a new Safe Step Walk-In Tub. Not applicable with any previous walk-in tub purchase. Offer available while supplies last. No cash value. Must present offer at time of purchase. CSLB 1082165 NSCB 0082999 0083445

EASE OF USE CERTIFIED | MADE IN TENNESSEE | BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS | LIFETIME LIMITED WARRANTY

FINANCING AVAILABLE WITH APPROVED CREDIT

'It was so dark; it felt so scary:' Aunt recalls finding body of missing teen near Windsor

By **Stephen Faleski**
Staff Writer

Eighteen-year-old Aonesty Selby's own family – not sheriff's deputies – were the first to find the missing Williamsburg teenager's body lying on a dirt logging path in a remote area of Isle of Wight County.

Aonesty's aunt, Ebony Selby, had set out with a party of family members the night of Jan. 13 to go looking for her niece. Their search ended up taking them across the four-mile James River Bridge, and another 20-plus miles south through Isle of Wight.

"I didn't even know what county we were in. ... It was so dark; it felt so scary," Ebony recalled, speaking to *The Smithfield Times* by phone a week after the grisly discovery.

They'd been following location pings from Aonesty's cellphone. The teenager had configured her phone to share her location with one of her friends, who'd then provided the tracker

to the family after they reported Aonesty missing earlier that day, Ebony said.

After traveling past farm fields and through wooded areas, the search party arrived on foot at an iron gate marked with a "no trespassing" sign off Blue Ridge Trail, roughly a mile and a half outside the town limits of Windsor. It was at that point that Ebony called police.

"They told us to go back, but we were too far in, we were closer to the ping than we were to our car," Ebony said.

That's where they found the dirt logging path and Aonesty's body.

"We were hoping to just find her phone," Ebony said.

Ebony remembers her niece as a "fun loving soul" with a "huge family" and "a lot of friends."

"She loved kids," Ebony said. "She loved to do hair and makeup and nails. ... Very much a girly girl."

Aonesty "had her life

planned" and was hoping to attend either cosmetology school or to train as a phlebotomist, Ebony said. "I can't believe we're here."

Three days later, the Isle of Wight County Sheriff's Office and Newport News Police Department would arrest and charge 21-year-old Newport News resident Andarius McClelland with killing Selby.

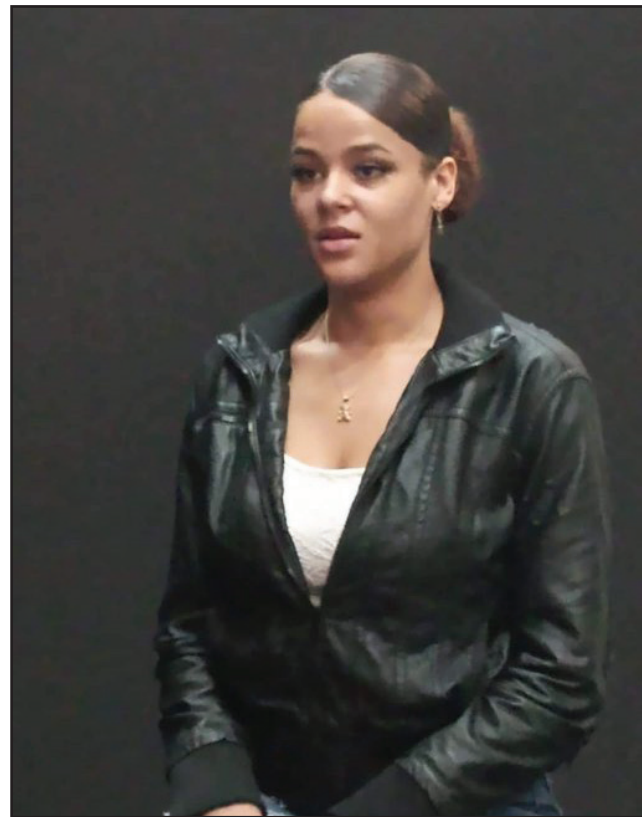
Sheriff's Office investigators contend in court filings that Aonesty left the Williamsburg home she shared with her roommate, Sabina Appel, at 1:18 p.m. on Jan. 11 for a date with McClelland, whom she knew by the name "Darius." According to the court filings, Aonesty received \$30 from "Lucas Duke," which investigators say is another alias for McClelland, via a CashApp account she shared with another aunt, and used that money to hire an Uber driver to take her to an apartment McClelland shared with his brother, Andricus.

The car arrived at

McClelland's apartment roughly half an hour later, at 1:49 p.m. Brother Andricus, according to court filings, told police that Andarius and Aonesty were both at the apartment the night of her disappearance, and that Andarius had asked to borrow Andricus' 2021 Dodge Charger to give Aonesty a ride home. The car was seen at 10:47 p.m. Jan. 11 leaving Isle of Wight and entering Newport News, and Andricus told police it had been returned to him covered in dirt.

Andricus also told police, according to court filings, that he'd discovered his Glock 9mm pistol missing from a nightstand drawer after Andarius left with Aonesty, and that when he'd confronted Andarius about the missing firearm, Andarius had told him he'd "needed to get rid of the gun" and had sold it.

On Jan. 16, the state medical examiner's office in Norfolk determined Aonesty's cause of death to be a single gunshot wound.



Aonesty Selby

McClelland is charged with second-degree murder and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony. He

is scheduled to appear in Isle of Wight County General District Court on April 6 for a preliminary hearing.