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month sentence on Aug. 15.

Aug. 30, 2022



By Lauren Pack, Journal-News, Hamilton, Ohio (TNS)

A Wayne Township (Ohio) man who admitted to stealing more than \$700,000 from the Animal Friends Humane Society pet shelter in Hamilton while serving as a volunteer treasurer was sentenced to prison on Aug. 15 and ordered to pay restitution.

Jeremy Bruce Taylor, 48, of the 3900 block of Withrow Road, pleaded guilty in June

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2014 to March 28, 2021, according to Assistant Butler County Prosecutor Garrett Baker. The amount stolen totaled \$730,984.19, according to the assistant prosecutor.

“He was volunteering as the treasurer during that time,” Baker said. “(Taylor) used funds from Animal Friends’ bank account to pay off his own personal credit card. That alone was approximately \$677,000,” Baker told the Journal-News when Taylor pleaded guilty in June.

Stephens acknowledged Taylor’s lack of a criminal past but only gave him half credit for coming forward and pleading guilty because it was not until Taylor was caught and cornered that he gave the admission.

“It’s not like you panicked one time. (This was) a very calculated course of conduct for almost seven years,” Stephens said. Taylor took more than \$100,000 a year from the shelter all the while having a job making \$108,000, the judge said.

“People gave money to a cause to help creatures that could not help themselves—you literally took that money from them,” Stephens said.

Taylor’s attorney John O’Shea filed a sentencing motion urging the judge not to send Taylor to prison stating that Taylor panicked when he was having financial difficulty and he “would never have committed the offense had he believed any animals at the shelter would have suffered due to his offense.”

When Taylor first stole from Animal Friends, his family was going through a financial hardship, the attorney wrote.

“He was behind on his house payments and feared foreclosure of his home. Additionally, he had credit card debt and took out all he could from his 401(K) account. He panicked,” O’Shea wrote. “Like many in these types of cases, (Taylor)

always though he was going to be able to replace the funds and that each time he

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A number of people in the courtroom were volunteers, supports and employees of the shelter.

In a statement, Linda Dunaway, Animal Friends board present, urged the judge to give Taylor the maximum sentence.

“He should received the maximum punishment given his clear intent to steal from a charity, and his concealment and cover up of the crime, even after he was confronted by the board—all the while benefiting himself and his family rather than sick and homeless animals and the shelter that needed those funds,” Dunaway said.

Prosecutors say Taylor used the personal card for vacations and going to concerts and “was spending quite a lot per month.”

In addition, Taylor used the organization’s credit cards for his own benefit, including paying his cell phone bill and making purchases at Kings Island. There also were a number of purchases at Rural King and other businesses for Taylor’s farm.

Taylor also wrote checks to a fictitious vendor and when the Animal Friends Humane Society board asked for some bank financials, he provided with them with falsified statements, Baker said.

The Animal Friends Humane Society Board released a statement about Taylor in June.

“In the last few months, AFHS discovered that Jeremy Taylor, who was a member of our board and our treasurer for more than 20 years, had exploited the trust we placed in him and used his training as a CPA and knowledge of our financial processes to steal from this organization. The board found the theft on its own and has been

working with the Butler County authorities to prosecute this theft and abuse of

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