



Columbus City Attorney

Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr.

eNewsletter

Volume 4, Issue 1

A Word from City Attorney Pfeiffer

As 2014 continues to unfold, I hope everyone is staying warm and staying committed to their goals and New Year's resolutions. In this latest edition of our e-newsletter you will be able to read about some of the goals and priorities we made for ourselves in the City Attorney's office.

Last year I convened a special meeting of our Zone Initiative team to talk about taking a taskforce-like approach against problem hotels that have become havens for prostitution and drug trafficking. I'm sure many have seen the media coverage of our injunction against Columbus Inn and Suites and the temporary restraining order against Red Carpet Inn, both near the I-71/SR-161 interchange. We also are getting closer to a final resolution on the former Motel One site on the east side, and hope to have it torn down and the property put back to productive use.

Building these cases took time, patience, and teamwork. I especially want to thank members of the Division of Police and the State Fire Marshall's office for their diligence in gathering the evidence we needed to file complaints against the hotel owners. We look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts together.

On a personal note, I want to thank the [Ohio Association of Realtors](#) and their director of government affairs, Scott Williams, for inviting me to speak at their annual winter conference last month about Columbus' efforts to clean up blighted properties.

I also want to thank Shannon Hardin from Mayor Coleman's staff for inviting me to speak to a lively group of Metro High School students during their recent visit to City Hall.

Finally, a very special thanks to City Auditor Hugh Dorrian for swearing me in as I start a new four-year term serving the residents of Columbus.



Scenes from City Attorney Pfeiffer's discussion about citizen participation in government during a visit to City Hall by Metro High School students.

February 2014



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Columbus City Attorney
Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr.
77 North Front Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone 614.645.7385
Fax 614.645.6949
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Crime Ridden Hotels put on Notice

Within the span of 24 cold and blustery hours in mid-January, the City Attorney's office received some heart-warming news: Judge Teresa Liston granted the city's motion for a permanent injunction against Mohammad and Umtal Ashraf, husband and wife owners of Columbus Inn and Suites; and the next day, Environmental Court Judge Daniel Hawkins granted a temporary restraining order against the owners of the Red Carpet Inn, allowing the city to shut down the troubled hotel and board it up. The hotels, located about a half mile apart from each other in north Columbus, were fraught with problems.



The State Fire Marshall found multiple code violations at Columbus Inn and Suites during at least 50 visits between 2011 and 2013. The Columbus Division of Police were dispatched 497 times within a 15-month time span following complaints of on-going drug sales and prostitution occurring on the premises.

There were at least 234 police runs to the Red Carpet Inn in 2012 and 358 in 2013. The State Fire Marshall found multiple fire code violations during eight different inspections last year. The hotel



also was the location of multiple shootings, including a homicide on May 13, 2012 when the victim was pronounced dead at the scene.

Several police investigations at both locations resulted in the arrest and conviction of numerous individuals for prostitution-related offenses. Covert operations also uncovered evidence of extensive drug dealing, including several purchases of heroin and crack cocaine.

In order to close Columbus Inn and Suites, the City Attorney's office had to prove the Ashrafs were guilty of maintaining a nuisance by establishing that they, as owners of the premises, "knew of, participated in, or acquiesced to the activity which constituted the nuisance" as prescribed by [Chapter 3767](#) of the Ohio Revised Code.

The court ruling found that the Ashrafs were notified of the nuisance activities through several different methods and did "absolutely nothing" to abate the problems.

In addition to ordering the hotel closed for a year (which is the maximum time allowed under state law), the court issued a permanent injunction against the property, the Ashrafs, and any future owners. The Ashrafs also are enjoined from maintaining a public nuisance at any of the other properties they own in Franklin County.

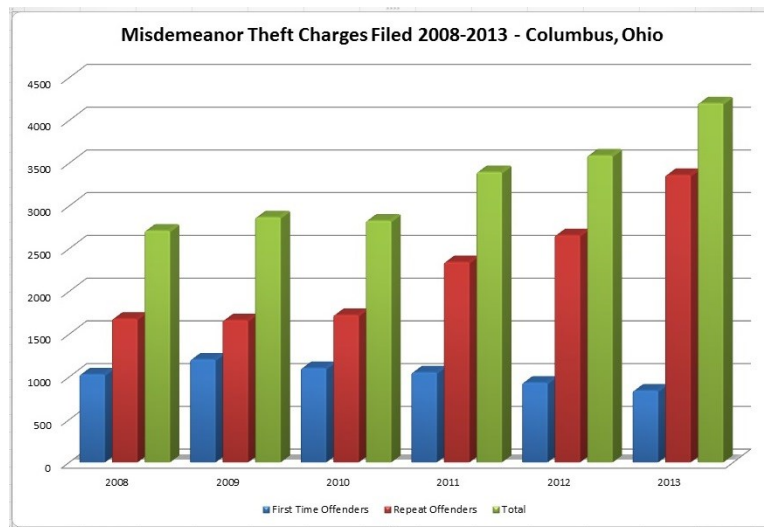


A permanent injunction hearing against Red Carpet Inn is set for March 4. Same as Columbus Inn and Suites, the burden of proof for city prosecutors is to prove the owners were well aware of the nuisance activity occurring on their property. On at least six occasions—via certified mail, in-person visit, and direct phone call—the Columbus Division of Police notified the owners/proprietors of the hotel that illegal activity was occurring on their premises.

Retail Theft on the Rise Over the Last Five Years

Chief of Staff Bill Hedrick has monitored Columbus' shoplifting trends for years, so when the stats seem to be going in the wrong direction, he has some ideas why.

Last year, city prosecutors filed 4202 theft charges, nearly 20 percent more than 2012 and 55 percent more than 2008. The total value of stolen merchandise recovered by authorities increased from nearly \$423,000 in 2012 to more than \$539,000 in 2013. The average value of each theft also increased, from \$118 in 2012 to \$128 last year.



The number of cases involving theft of items over \$500 increased as well, from 134 to 168.

Hedrick attributes these rising trends to several factors: a still-recovering economy; organized theft rings targeting specific types of merchandise; better surveillance at stores; strong collaboration between merchants and city prosecutors; and, probably the most prevalent reason, drug abuse.

“Many of these thieves steal to feed their drug habit,” explained Hedrick. “It’s a vicious cycle where they don’t work due to their drug dependency and extensive criminal records, so they steal, get caught, get released and start all over again.”

“Retail theft is a daily battle, with some experts estimating that more than \$10 billion in goods are stolen from U.S. merchants each year.”

**Columbus City Attorney
Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr.**

One of the few statistics that decreased in 2013 was the number of cases filed against first-time offenders. Five years ago, 42 percent of theft charges involved first-time offenders. That number plunged to 20 percent in 2013—meaning four out of five theft cases were perpetrated by individuals with prior criminal records.

A prime example of one of these repeat offenders is 23 year old Sarah Anne Campbell. Despite being indicted on felony possession of heroin and crack cocaine charges in July, Campbell was on the loose and racking up seven arrest warrants for stealing from several west side retailers, often targeting the same stores over and over again. (Please note that the City Attorney's office prosecutes misdemeanor criminal offenses not felonies, in accordance with state law.)

Campbell stole items ranging from almost \$200 worth of plumbing fittings to kitchen knives, high-end headphones, a blu-ray player, Nike men's shoes, and five sets of *Jawbone Jambox* speakers ranging in value from \$239.99 to \$299.99 a piece.

Campbell was finally arrested last month, the day after Hedrick targeted her as part of the City Attorney's "Fugitive of the Week" program.



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News and Notes



Chief Prosecutor Lara Baker-Morrish was re-appointed to represent the Ohio Municipal Attorneys Association on the Ohio Supreme Court's Commission on Specialized Dockets. Her new term runs through December 31, 2016.

Assistant City Prosecutor Adam Friedman speaking with police recruits during their training session at the Franklin County Municipal Court.



Chief of Staff Bill Hedrick wishing local news icon Carol Luper well as she retired from her storied career last year.



Principal Assistant City Attorney Robert Tobias (middle) receiving the Capital Crossroads *Unsung Hero Award* in November. Paul Sipp (left), chair of the Capital Crossroads SID Board, and Cleve Ricksecker (right), executive director of Capital Crossroads, presented the award.



Assistant City Prosecutors Shawnda Martin & Jarrod Skinner getting some "hands-on" training at the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy in London, OH last summer. Shawnda and Jarrod are the prosecutors assigned to the Franklin County Environmental Court.

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Assistant City Attorney Wes Phillips with our interns from the Central Ohio Workforce Investment Corporation (COWIC) Summer Youth Employment program.



Chief of Staff Bill Hedrick with community leader Lisa Boggs at last year's South Ogden Blockwatch National Night Out event.



Assistant City Attorney Kristen Kroflich joined by police officers during National Night Out. As a member of the Zone Initiative team, Kristen works on quality of life cases on the city's west side.



The Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit posing for a group photo with City Attorney Pfeiffer during last year's filming of *Just the Facts*.

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Appellate Unit Director Melanie Tobias giving a tour of the courthouse to students from the Columbus Bar Association's *Law and Leadership* program.



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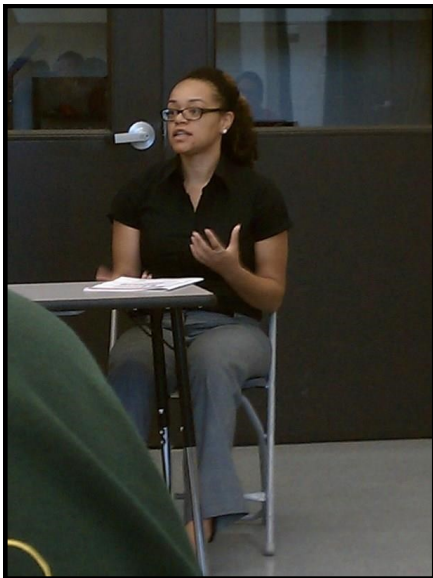
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Assistant City Attorney Jaiza Page speaking at the annual Neighborhood Best Practices Conference. Jaiza is a member of the Zone Initiative team and is assigned to handle nuisance cases on the southeast side of Columbus.

Assistant City Attorneys Jaiza Page, Shawnda Martin, and Jarrod Skinner meeting with members of the public during the Environmental Court's open house sponsored by Judge Daniel Hawkins.



Behind the scenes during the taping of the latest episode of *Fugitive Files* with Bill Hedrick.



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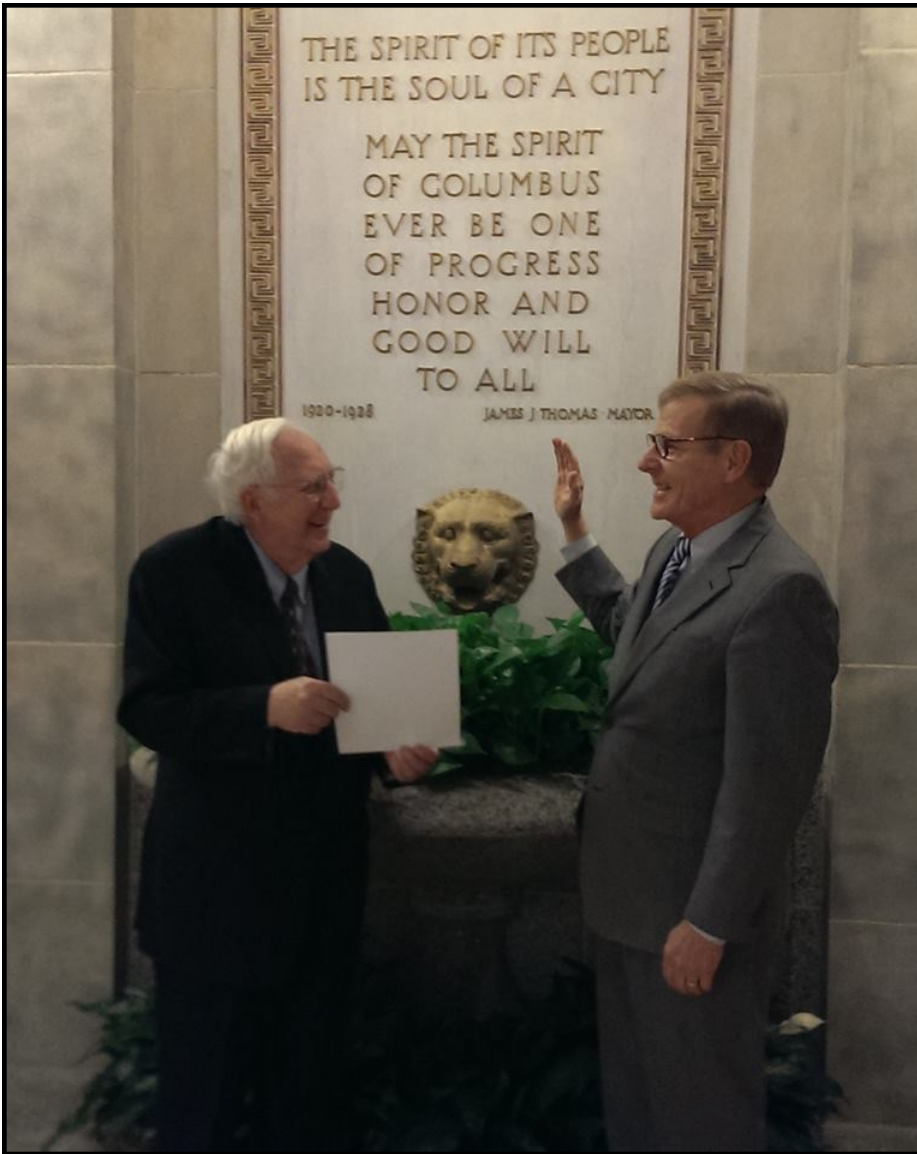
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Columbus City Auditor Hugh J. Dorrian administering the oath of office to City Attorney Pfeiffer. City Attorney Pfeiffer looks forward to serving the residents of Columbus for another new term.



In recognition of January as National Stalking Awareness month, the University of Toledo invited Anne Murray to serve as a guest speaker on January 29. Anne serves as director of the City Attorney's nationally acclaimed Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit.

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Meet the Staff

The new year has brought new roles for some familiar faces in the office. Steve Dunbar transitioned from the Police Legal Advisor Bureau, where he had served since 2007, to the Litigation Section. Steve, who began in the office as an assistant city prosecutor in 2005, also will be coordinating the efforts of the Zone Initiative and will continue to serve as the attorney assigned to handle nuisance cases in zone four on the city's north side.



Steve Dunbar

Title: Assistant City Attorney; Special Assistant United States Attorney

Education: Ohio State University College of Law, J.D.; Otterbein University, B.A.; Fairbanks High School, Milford Center, Ohio.

Long-time assistant city prosecutor Deana Overking, who most recently served as a special domestic violence prosecutor in the Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit, is taking over Steve's role as a police legal advisor. Deana started with the office as a law clerk in 2006.

Another former law clerk, Shayla Favor, has been promoted to assistant city attorney and will serve as a member of the Zone Initiative in zone five on the city's northeast side. Shayla also has served as an intake officer and paralegal/legal investigator in the office and looks forward to her new role.



Shayla Favor

Title: Assistant City Attorney
Education: Capital University Law School, J.D.; Ohio State University, B.A.; Wayne High School, Dayton, Ohio.



Deana Overking

Title: Police Legal Advisor
Education: Capital University Law School, J.D.; DePauw University, B.A.; Indian Hill High School, Cincinnati, Ohio.



Back by popular demand, we have some more random musings about veteran attorney Brad Hummel. An astute reader noticed in one of last year's newsletters that Brad didn't have the typical *J.D.* (*juris doctorate*) following his name like almost every other attorney in the United States does. Instead, Brad has something abbreviated as LL.B.

Questions arose: what exactly is an LL.B. and has Brad been masquerading all these years as an attorney without proper accreditation? It turns out that

LL.B. stands for bachelor of laws, the honor bestowed upon all law school graduates through 1970. Beginning in January 1971, the degree was renamed *J.D.* in the United States.

Brad was offered the opportunity to switch the title of his degree at the time, but opted to stick with his LL.B. because he says he thought it made him unique and helped him stand out in a sea of other attorneys. He also added that he was too cheap to pay the required administrative fee, which he admits was a "very nominal amount."

So, why did American law schools switch from the bachelor of laws to *juris doctorate* back in 1971? The answer is unclear. Brad doesn't remember and even this article from the Wall Street Journal's [Law Blog](#) couldn't find a definitive answer after consulting with the American Bar Association and the Association of American Law Schools.

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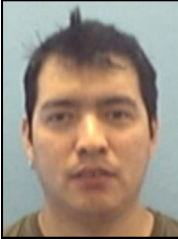
Citizen Action

Several members of our [Crash and Dash list](#), considered to be some of Columbus' most wanted hit and run suspects, have continued to evade arrest. We are asking for the public's help to bring these fugitives to justice.

Anyone with information concerning these individuals is asked to please contact Assistant City Prosecutor Bill Hedrick at 614.645.8874 or brhedrick@columbus.gov.

If you are one of the listed individuals, you are strongly encouraged to turn yourself in or contact an attorney. The Columbus Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service can be reached at 614.221.0754 and the Franklin County Public Defender's Office can be reached at 614.525.3194.

OSCAR LEE



Last known address: 518 E. Town St. Apt. 321 • Columbus, Ohio 43215

DOB: 8/17/1979 (Age 34)

Height: 6'0" **Weight:** 180

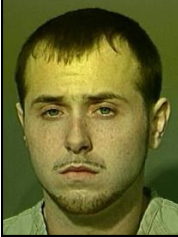
Case Number(s): 2011 TRD 106946 and 2012 TRD 131624

Hair: Black **Eyes:** Brown

Charges: 2135.12(A) – Failure to Stop – Accident (two counts); 2131.33(A) – Failure to Control; 2131.08(A) – Marked Lanes; 2135.08(A3) – Tag to Another Vehicle

WANTED

ROBERT NAGLE



Last known address: 1312 S. Champion Ave. • Columbus, Ohio 43206

DOB: 10/04/1986 (Age 27)

Height: 5'9" **Weight:** 210

Case Number(s): 2013 TRD 100982

Hair: Brown **Eyes:** Blue

Charges: 2135.12(A) – Failure to Stop – Accident; 2135.12 – Hit Skip – Public Street; 2131.33(A) – Failure to Control (two counts); 2141.11(A) – Driving Under Suspension (two counts)

WANTED

CHARLENE WEEKS



Last known address: 4962 Northtowne Blvd. • Columbus, Ohio 43229

DOB: 1/28/1966 (Age 47)

Height: 5'5" **Weight:** 140

Case Numbers: 2012 CRB 008839, 2012 CRB 009568, 2012 TRD 131879

Hair: Brown **Eyes:** Green

Charges: 2919.27 – Violation of Protection Order (two counts); 2141.12(A1) – No Operator's License; 2135.12 – Hit Skip – Public Street; 2141.11 – Driving Under Suspension; 2133.02(A) – Reckless Operation

WANTED



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