

Missoulian

Hamilton drops trespassing charge against former mayoral candidate

By PERRY BACKUS Ravalli Republic | Posted: Wednesday, August 18, 2010 10:30 pm

HAMILTON - The city of Hamilton has dropped a misdemeanor trespassing charge against former Hamilton mayoral candidate Michael Spreadbury.

City attorney Ken Bell said the decision this week followed a Montana Supreme Court order upholding an order of protection that restrained Spreadbury from entering the Bitterroot Public Library for five years.

"The library was never out to get him," Bell said. "It was him who frightened and threatened the staff. All the library was interested in was protecting its patrons and staff.

"This order does that," he said.

Spreadbury was found guilty of criminal trespass at the library by a six-person jury in Hamilton City Court last February. He immediately appealed that decision to district court, which is where the city dropped the charges this week.

The trespassing charge followed a dispute in 2009 between the library and Spreadbury over his insistence of placing on reserve a copy of a letter accusing local public officials of routinely denying justice to citizens.

Last November, he was charged with felony intimidation for allegedly threatening a Hamilton librarian. That case continues to work its way through the courts.

In April, Spreadbury filed lawsuits against city and county officials, as well as the librarian he is accused of intimidating. He is seeking a total of \$1.3 million.

He has also filed a civil complaint in federal district court seeking \$3.6 million from 18 different parties, including the Ravalli Republic and Supporters of Abuse Free Environments, a Ravalli County advocacy group for abused women and families known as SAFE.

The federal court has not yet acted on that complaint.

On Wednesday, Spreadbury told the Ravalli Republic that he had not committed any crimes and the librarian's order of protection "has lies all through it."

"The order of protection is not going to do anything. ... It just proved that this town is corrupt," Spreadbury said.

Spreadbury also took the Ravalli Republic to task for its reporting on his case, including running a front page story on his trial in city court that included his photograph.

He said the FBI had told him the newspaper was wrong for "criminalizing something that's not a crime."

Bell said the decision to drop the charges was as much a business decision as anything else.

"It cost the taxpayers plenty to go through this once," Bell said. "It was going to cost plenty more the second time. I wasn't going to try it. We were going to have bring in someone else.

"It was almost like a business decision," he said. "We've got other places to spend money on. ... If he's found on the library premises again, we will immediately charge him and proceed to prosecute."

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