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Candidate attends procedural hearing

by SEPP JANNOTTA - Ravalli Republic | Posted: Tuesday, November 3, 2009 12:00 am

Hamilton mayoral candidate Michael Spreadbury spent less than 10 minutes Monday in court for a procedural hearing stemming from charges that he criminally trespassed at the Bitterroot Public Library.

The misdemeanor charge was issued in August - Spreadbury pleaded not guilty - following a visit to the Hamilton library after he had been banned from the premises because he insisted he be allowed to place a letter accusing local public officials of violating citizens' rights on the library's reserve shelf.

One day before Hamilton voters are to decide the fate of his run for the mayor's seat, Spreadbury asked if Hamilton City Attorney Ken Bell intended to take his case to trial.

"Does the prosecutor intend to proceed with this case?" asked Spreadbury, who was answering questions from a voter outside City Hall prior to the court session.

With no redirect beyond a glance from City Court Judge Michael Reardon, Bell responded that he did indeed.

Reardon told Spreadbury that Bell will have a week to respond to a pair of motions he has filed.

On Oct. 26, Spreadbury, who is representing himself after initially requesting a public defender, filed a request for change of venue and a motion to reconsider the charges.

A trial date is set for Jan. 28.

If convicted, Spreadbury faces a maximum penalty of a \$500 fine, six months in jail and \$92 in court fees and surcharges.

Meanwhile, Spreadbury, 38, has continued his mayoral campaign.

On his Web site - www.spreadbury4mayor.com - Spreadbury said: "First and foremost, I am for Oxygen, and the proper use of it. Second, I am for the U.S. Constitution, and implementing it in Ravalli County. We need it, due to people in power abusing our right to assemble, speak, and pursue happiness. It is our right to do this, not their right to decide WHOM is allowed to do this in Ravalli County Montana."

According to the Web site, Spreadbury is a geological consultant, a former teacher and a former project specialist at the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Spreadbury, who also proclaims that he has owned a firearm since 1981, has had previous run-ins with local law enforcement.

In October 2006, he was in court for allegedly assaulting a neighbor who had a burn pile on or near their adjoining property line.

According to court records, a jury convicted Spreadbury of misdemeanor assault in August 2007 and he was sentenced to six months in jail with five months suspended and \$514 in court costs and fees. A judge later threw out the conviction, ruling he had not received a timely trial.

Since then, Spreadbury has maintained his arrest, prosecution and conviction were part of an ongoing conspiracy by top county officials, supported by the Ravalli Republic, to deny Constitutional rights to him and others.

He has voiced his complaints about corruption and incompetence at public meetings, on his Web site and in visits to county offices.

The county commission wrote Spreadbury a letter in February asking him to stop his harassment of county employees.

Also, according to public records, police have responded 13 times since April 2008 to complaints about Spreadbury's behavior at the library, the county administration building, the county clerk of court's office, the Ravalli Republic, the Hamilton School District, Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital, KMSO 102.5 Mountain FM and the county fairgrounds.

All of the complaints allege that he acted inappropriately, which Spreadbury denies. He has only been charged in connection with the library incident.

Reardon used Monday's hearing to explain to Spreadbury that, as his own defense counsel, papers detailing the criminal complaint, the statute that charges were made under and a guide explaining a jury trial would be mailed to him within 10 days. The judge also explained the process for evidence discovery.

Although he was in front of the judge for less than 10 minutes, it was too long for the mayoral candidate, who appeared displeased as he left the courtroom.

"Waste of time," Spreadbury said.

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