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Wednesday, October 16, 2013



Charge against former St. Mary's bank manager dropped

\$10,000 withdrawn from customer's account

By John Wharton Staff Writer

St. Mary's prosecutors have dismissed a charge against a former bank branch manager of illegally obtaining the property of a vulnerable adult, a case filed last July in court papers alleging she took \$10,000 from a man's account.

The case scheduled for trial last week was dismissed in advance of that date. The county's state's attorney said it had not been established that the bank customer was incapable of making independent decisions on his own, including loaning the money to Maria Juanita Nickerson.

"How do you prove this?" State's Attorney Richard Fritz (R) asked last week while at his office in the county courthouse. "It's really quite that simple."

The bank customer's niece took his bank account checks from him because she feared he would be taken advantage of due to his mental state, according to the charging papers that alleged Nickerson, 54, ordered new checks for the PNC Bank customer's account, while she worked as its Breton branch manager.

A check against the customer's account for \$10,000 was written last March and deposited in Nickerson's account, and the check "appear[ed] to be signed by the victim, but filled out by another party," according to a charges application filed by Trooper Michael Parker of the Maryland State Police.

Nickerson admitted to the bank's fraud investigators to "borrowing the money from the victim," and she agreed to return the money to the customer's account, the charges application stated, adding that a bank investigator forwarded to police "an IOU, signed by the suspect, to the victim."

Fritz said that his office received no indications that the bank customer's family had sought guardianship of him to control his personal affairs. "There's nothing that I've seen in any of the reports," the prosecutor said.

Kevin McDevitt, Nickerson's lawyer, said last week, "Maria Nickerson worked at PNC Bank in Leonardtown for 25 years. She was dedicated, loyal and trustworthy. There is not a dishonest bone in her body."

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