

# New Jersey woman indicted in wire fraud scheme

Review Staff

MARTINSBURG — A New Jersey woman was indicted last week on charges involving wire fraud in conjunction with a \$330,000 real estate transaction through a Hampshire County law firm.

Michelle Graham, 27, of Jersey City, N.J. was indicted on two counts involving a wire fraud conspiracy. Court documents report that Graham was involved in a scheme that caused a Hampshire County

law firm to send proceeds from a real estate sale to a business account she had opened in New Jersey. The parties to the transaction intended the proceeds to be sent to pay off the seller's lender — not to Graham, who wasn't part of the transaction.

Court documents detailed further that Graham then spent nearly \$30,000 of the money before the fraud was detected, purchasing items such as a Louis Vuitton handbag,

a laptop, furniture, and a purchase at a used luxury car dealership.

If Graham is convicted, she'll face up to 20 years in prison for each of the two wire fraud charges, determined by a federal district court judge.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation investigated this case, with help from the Hampshire County Sheriff's Office.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jarod Douglas is prosecuting the case. □

# 'Time, years and money'

## Last year's tornadoes, hail left long impacts on farmers here

Review Staff

"July 12th, I'll never forget that day."

Trina Cox led farm crawlers around the Arnold Farm last weekend for the second annual Hampshire County Farm Crawl with ease, as no tornadoes or hail interrupted their planning or destroyed any buildings this summer.

Last year, while preparing for the crawl, Cox found herself hiding in the wheelbase of a tractor when winds clocked a gust of 102 miles per hour, and hail bigger than a dime fell from the sky.

The Arnold Farm lost an open-faced building, 20 percent of their total crop, and fences had to be mended from all the tree damage.

Fortunately, no animals were hurt. One of the roofs from the grain bins was damaged badly, but there is no leaking, which is good news as fixing the roof alone would cost \$10,000 — not including labor costs.

"I would say we are 90 percent cleaned up," John Arnold III said and shared that they had been unable to replace



KENIA ITZEP Review Staff

Eric Hott, owner of (left) E.H. Chocolates & More, was able to sell produce and products this year.

the torn building.

A few trees still linger on the ground from the incident, and some fencing still has to be fixed — work adds up when dealing with 700 acres for crops and cattle.

"It takes a long time to get anything done — the nice thing is that the 100-year-old barn is still standing," Cox said.

E.H. Chocolate owner Eric Hott saw just as much if not more damage down in Kirby.

All his crops faced severe damage and his sweet corn was left at around 85-90 percent loss, leaving no produce available for sale during last year's farm crawl.

"I lost thousands and thousands of dollars in crops, with no crop insurance" he said of his small-scale crop operation.

Hott finally got a new roof on the house a month ago, at



Review Files

An open-face building was completely destroyed last year at Arnold Farm.

no fault to the roofers, but there were so many people in line after the tornado that had to get their roofs replaced.

Hott had to get the house "doctored up" before the fall and winter, to prevent cold air and water going through it.

"I had bushels and bushels of everything (lost), I had two-inch-holes in beets," Hott recalled.

His "beautiful, luscious" hayfields were down to only a couple of inches within the 10-minute incident.

He shared that these damages served as a "wake up call" not only to him, but his neighbors in reviewing insurance policies.

Looking at pretty perfect rows of produce, folks wouldn't be able to tell that any damage had ever occurred, but Hott said the farm has not recovered "materialistically or financially — that will take more time, years and money." □

# Capon Bridge faces sewer plant challenges, honors former mayor

SYDNEY MAURER

Review Correspondent

CAPON BRIDGE — The late Donald W. "Bobby" Largent, who served as Capon Bridge's mayor from 2005 until his death in 2011, was honored for his contributions to the town at last week's Capon Bridge Town Council meeting.

The meeting began with the administration of the oath of office to winners of last month's municipal election. The mayor and all 4 members of the town council running for re-election had won their races, so there was no change in the composition of the council.

However, no candidates had filed to run for town recorder, so Capon Bridge is again looking for a town resident willing to serve.

Councilwoman Michelle Warnick began by swearing in Mayor Laura Turner, who then administered the oath of office to town council members Dorinda Strother, Michelle Warnick, David McMaster and Rob Toothman.

"You're stuck with us until June 30, 2027," Mayor Turner announced. This is true of all the successful candidates except Strother, who had run to fill a partial term and will be up for re-election next year, along with Chris Turner, the only member of the council not on this year's ballot.

Mayor Turner began the meeting by presenting the resolution honoring Largent, who, in addition to the years spent as mayor, had served on the town council and as a lifetime member of the volunteer fire department and the rescue squad.

The mayor credited Largent with being instrumental in helping the town acquire the town hall building. She pointed out the town has just paid off the mortgage on the building, thanks to the income from the municipal sales tax adopted 3 years ago.

Former mayor Steve Sirbaugh described other things Largent had done for the town, including negotiating buying the town hall building at cost from Steve



SYDNEY MAURER Review Correspondent

Councilwoman Michelle Warnick (L) swears in Capon Bridge Mayor Laura Turner, who ran unopposed in last month's municipal election.

Slonaker and then persuading others to work on it for free.

Largent's daughter Cindy Ludwick, who was present at the meeting, commented that "the first thing he would say is, 'he didn't do it by himself,'" adding, "he loved Capon Bridge."

Much of the meeting was taken up with issues at the new sewer plant, where the heat is causing problems.

Councilman Chris Turner, who serves as water and sewer superintendent, reported the system is tripping out, with pumps that worked perfectly in cooler weather shutting off when it gets hot.

The pumps are under a one-year warranty, and the company that supplied them was reported to be working on a solution.

Water use at the new plant is also an issue, given the limits set by the state Division of Natural Resources, which controls the spring that supplies the town. Councilman Turner has cut back as far as he could, reducing water use to 190,000 gallons from 320,000 gallons a month.

In other business, Mayor Laura Turner announced the town planning commission will hold a meeting at 6 p.m. on Aug. 9 to set priorities to be included in the town's comprehensive plan. She encouraged citizens to attend and give input.

Councilman Chris Turner

reported trimming 8-10 trailer loads of branches off the trees lining the town park fence along Cold Stream Road. It was suggested trimming may be all that is needed, instead of cutting the trees down as suggested last month.

The town is still waiting for Liller Paving to pave Birch Street, with Mayor Laura Turner hoping it will happen soon, but saying "maybe by September."

Mayor Turner announced that the town's Citizen of the Year award would be given out at the Founder's Day Festival at the end of September.

Dorinda Strother was appointed Capon Bridge representative to the Hampshire County Development Authority, and Mayor Turner will represent the town at district meetings on the opioid settlement.

The children's bike race sponsored by Light Up Capon Bridge was judged a success, and Councilwoman Michelle Warnick announced Light Up Capon Bridge's next movie night would be Aug. 11. □



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<sup>1</sup> Source: 2022/2023 CareSource Marketplace Open Enrollment Summary

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://thefinancebuff.com/federal-poverty-levels-for-obamacare.html>



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