

# Misconduct alleged in BEAR League case

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**Megan Feldman, Tribune News Service**

TAHOE CITY — An attorney for BEAR League Executive Director Ann Bryant has filed motions alleging misconduct by the Placer County Sheriff's Department and the District Attorney's Office.

Bryant, 50, was arrested last July and charged with battery of a peace officer and carrying a loaded gun in public. She faces two misdemeanor charges, each with a maximum sentence of one year in prison.

Bryant's attorney, Michele Hagan, claims deputies arrested his client without probable cause and used excessive force during and after the arrest. The defense is requesting statements and evidence resulting from the arrest be dismissed, and in a separate motion accused a deputy district attorney of tampering with and withholding evidence.

"A substantial issue in the trial of this case may be the fabrication of charges and or evidence, false arrest, false imprisonment, improper police procedures E and illegal search and seizure by the officer involvedE," states a motion filed by Hagan to gain access to sheriff's office personnel files.

The county's counsel, Sabrina M. Thompson, filed a response to Hagan's request for access to the records. Thompson rejected the claim by Hagan that the officers have a history of misconduct.

One of the motions the defense filed seeks court sanctions on the District Attorney's Office for allegedly tampering with and withholding evidence. Hagan alleges the prosecution hasn't provided the defense with a complete copy of the police communication tape despite numerous requests. The versions provided, according to Hagan, were edited, the second version contained 11 calls not in the first tape and three calls included in the first version were omitted. Hagan also noted that it took seven and a half months to get the second tape.

"In 14 years, I've never had such stonewalling," she said this week.

Bryant said in a statement that she wants to know why the complete tape is being withheld, adding, "I'm trying to defend myself and the DA's office is denying my right to due process and a fair hearing and trial..."

Hagan is seeking monetary sanctions on Placer County deputy district attorneys Chris Cattran and Bill Doyle of \$1,000 per act of tampering, editing, or omitting.

Cattran said the prosecution will be filing a response.

Judge James F. Dawson is expected to rule on the sanctions at a June 25 hearing. Another hearing is set for June 18 in the North Tahoe Conference Center. The original trial date was scraped, with no date on the calendar.

Bryant was arrested July 25, 2002, after a neighbor notified her that a 400-pound bear was trying to enter a window at a nearby house in Homewood. According to the sheriff's report, she arrived at the scene in her Toyota Landcruiser about 10 p.m., a pump action Ithaca shotgun loaded with shells containing rubber buckshot propped on the passenger seat.

Deputy Richard Schnoor was retrieving bear aversion equipment from the rear of his patrol vehicle when he saw Bryant walking toward the bear and asked what she was doing, he wrote in the report. After approaching the deputy and saying, "I'm Ann Bryant. I'm here to help you," Bryant reached out and struck the deputy on the arm with an open hand, according to the report.

"I was not injured but she struck me hard enough to knock me off balance," Schnoor stated. He then handcuffed Bryant, who reportedly resisted.

Based on her assertion there was no probable cause to arrest Bryant, Hagan made a motion to suppress all evidence and statements resulting from the arrest, including the shotgun and rubber buckshot shells and all comments made by Bryant and the deputies.

Since it's illegal for people to carry a loaded firearm in a vehicle in public, the prosecution said officers don't need permission to examine a car if they believe it contains a gun.



Bryant has made court appearances related to other charges in the past, though both cases were dismissed. In March 2000, Bryant was charged with illegally taking a bear cub from Squaw Valley. Charges were dropped in January 2001. Bryant had taken the anemic cub to the Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care Center.

Also in 2000, a Rubicon resident accused Bryant of trespassing after she entered a home to remove a bear. Charges in that case were dropped in April 2001.

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