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Black History - Page 3**

**COMMUNITY: Daleville Library  
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Daleville

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## Former Level Plains magistrate of 25 years pleads guilty to theft

By Melissa Braun  
Sun Staff Writer

A woman employed as the Level Plains town magistrate for approximately 25 years has pleaded guilty to theft of town money following an extensive investigation by the Alabama Bureau of Investigation.

Marsha Neagley was sentenced to three years in prison following a plea of guilty to theft in the first degree and using position for personal gain, both felony charges. She is currently on bond awaiting a probation hearing, said Dale County District Attorney Kirke Adams.

According to Level Plains Mayor Tyrus Waters, Neagley stole more than \$4,000 from the town between 2006 and 2007 while working as the magistrate/court clerk.

Town officials learned of the missing money after Level Plains Police Chief Lanice Bonds received information an individual's account had not been credited after he paid a fine.

After receiving the complaint, ABI and the Alabama state auditors were notified of possible missing monies from Level Plains.

An investigation and audit were simultaneously conducted.

An audit was conducted for Fiscal Year 2006-2007, Adams explained. "There was only a small period they were permitted to audit."

After completion of the audit, Waters and Neagley were notified of the audit findings.

"It was determined a little

more than \$4,000 was missing," Adams said.

Neagley was then given the option to contest the audit findings or pay back the amount of missing money.

She chose the latter.

Waters said Level Plains received full payment of the missing monies in October of last year.

Neagley is not the first government employee to be charged with stealing public monies in Dale County, Adams said.

Adams cited two recent cases in which magistrates from Daleville and the county have been convicted of stealing public funds, adding his office has and will continue to fully prosecute individuals who participate in such serious crimes.

"I think we have sent that message in the past. People are trusted with public money and it is a shame when they use that money for their own gain," Adams said.

Waters said he pleaded the situation has been resolved and the missing money has been restored to the town, but added the situation has been a source of great stress for all parties involved.

"These situations, to me, are very unfortunate," he said. "It is very unfortunate when trust is violated. We are all responsible for our actions. We have to answer for them."

A date for Neagley's probation hearing has not been set at this time. Neagley is asking that she serve three years on probation for her crime instead of in a state penitentiary.