

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY  
**JAMES C. BACKSTROM**  
COUNTY ATTORNEY



Dakota County Judicial Center  
1560 Highway 55  
Hastings, Minnesota 55033-2392  
Kathryn M. Keena, Chief Deputy  
Thomas Donely, First Assistant  
Monica Jensen, Community Relations Director

Telephone  
(651) 438-4438  
FAX: (651) 438-4479 (Civil Division)  
FAX: (651) 438-4500 (Criminal Division)  
FAX: (651) 438-4499 (Admin Division)  
E-mail: attorney@co.dakota.mn.us

February 4, 2020

**NEWS RELEASE**

**COTTAGE GROVE POLICE OFFICER CHARGED WITH CRIMINAL SEXUAL CONDUCT**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom announced that **Adam Gentile Pelton**, age 40 of River Falls, Wisconsin, has been charged\* with three counts of Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Second Degree and four counts of Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Fourth Degree, in connection with the alleged inappropriate touching with sexual intent, of seven high school students from September 1, 2018 to October 4, 2019, in Cottage Grove. At the time of these alleged offenses occurred, Pelton was a law enforcement officer with the Cottage Grove Police Department who was assigned as the School Resource Officer for Park High School.

Backstrom indicated his Office is handling this case on a conflict basis for the Washington County Attorney's Office and that the investigation in this case was conducted by the Apple Valley Police Department. Pelton has been on Administrative Leave since the investigation began in October of 2019.

A summary of the allegations contained in the criminal complaint is set forth below:

After reports were made by several Park High School female students of inappropriate sexual contact initiated by a School Resource Officer, identified as Adam Pelton, the Apple Valley Police Department was requested to begin an investigation on October 4, 2019. During the course of this investigation it was learned that seven of these students claimed that Pelton repeatedly initiated hugs with them during which he would touch their buttocks over their clothing. Pelton was assigned a private office within the school without video surveillance. It was in this office that most of the alleged criminal conduct occurred. The investigation, however, did find video of Pelton initiating hugs with female students in the hallways of the school. Several students reported that Pelton would often call or refer to them as "beautiful" and "sweetheart". One of the students reported that Pelton called her beautiful and told her if he were her age, he would date her. This student also reported receiving Snapchat messages from Pelton. In one of those messages he made lunch plans with her over Summer break. Another student stated that Pelton would rest his hand on her buttocks four to five days a week during school while receiving a hug. She also reported receiving three requests over Snapchat to send him nude photographs which the student never sent.

When questioned during the investigation, Pelton denied touching any student's buttocks. He also initially denied asking any student for nude pictures, but later acknowledged asking one student for such pictures after she graduated from high school "as a joke".

Additional facts pertaining to this case can be found in the criminal complaint can be found at [Criminal Complaint Search](#).

At the time the alleged inappropriate sexual touching occurred, three of the student victims were between the ages of 13 and 15 and four were 16 to 17 years of age. Under Minnesota law, a person is guilty of a felony offense if the person touches a minor's intimate parts, which includes touching of buttocks over clothing; and the person is more than 48 months older than and in a position of authority over the minor. This conduct is Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Fourth Degree if the victim is 16 to 17-years-old and Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Second Degree if the victim is 13 to 15-years-old.

Pelton made his first court appearance on these charges this morning in Washington County District Court. Judge Tad Jude set bail in the amount of \$150,000 without conditions (\$ 50,000 with conditions) and set his next court appearance for March 2, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. in Stillwater.

Backstrom praised the Apple Valley Police Department for their thorough investigation into this matter.

If you have questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4440.

\*Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant/suspect is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.