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Thursday, September 16, 2004

Court candidate's wife charged

Birmingham woman pulled over with signs for opponent in car

By Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP — A district court candidate's wife faces drunken driving charges after being pulled over with a carload of campaign signs, some belonging to her husband's opponent.

Lori Barron, 33, of Birmingham is charged with operating while intoxicated in an incident in Bloomfield Township.

Barron is married to assistant Oakland County prosecuting attorney Marc Barron, candidate for Bloomfield 48th District Court judge. Barron will face off in November against West Bloomfield resident Steven Kaplan, an assistant Macomb County prosecuting attorney, for the elected post.

Mrs. Barron faces a preliminary examination on the misdemeanor charge, punishable by up to 93 days in jail, on Sept. 23.

Marc Barron had no comment on the incident, referring questions to campaign manager Alan Feuer, who stressed it took place without the candidate's knowledge or involvement.

"Lori made a silly mistake on pulling up some signs which blocked our signs," Feuer said. "She should have asked the property owner to take them down rather than handle it herself.

"When you work hard to get permission for sign placement, it gets to you when somebody just throws their signs up in the same place without permission."

Township police Captain Kurt Bowdin said an officer on patrol at 2 a.m. on July 12 on Telegraph Road became concerned when he saw a woman running near the Birmingham Farms apartment complex, south of Maple Road.

"When the officer was able to turn around, the woman was behind the wheel of a Toyota station wagon and appeared intoxicated," Bowdin said. "There were several signs lying in the backseat."

Lori Barron was cooperative and blew a .09 blood-alcohol level, over the .08 level in which a person is considered legally intoxicated, he said.

Bowdin said police investigated the 11 political signs and determined

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there was no larceny involved because the signs had been put at the location without the property owner's permission.

"The only signs to have permission to be at the site were the 'Barron for Judge' signs," Bowdin said. "Any other signs, unless claimed as property of the land owner, are considered abandoned. Therefore, no larceny or theft was involved."

Township attorney Thomas Ryan, who investigated the matter because Barron was charged under township ordinance, did not return telephone calls.

Barron was arraigned on the charge Aug. 25 and released on personal bond. On Sept. 1, the matter was transferred from 48th District Court to Royal Oak 44th District Court Terrance Brennan, Bowdin said, because "all three 48th District judges know her or her family and have recused themselves from hearing it."

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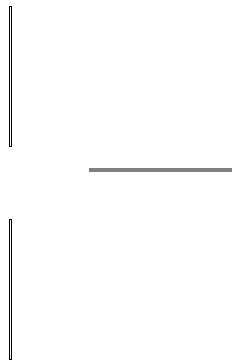
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