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Helena West Helena Police Officer Charged With False Imprisonment

A Helena West Helena Police Officer is facing a misdemeanor charge of false imprisonment, following investigators say he falsely arrested a woman who was walkin...

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charles byrd_1486497763789.JPG

Author: Kim Chaney

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Helena West Helena, AR. After a 2 month long internal investigation conducted by the Helena West Helena Police Department, a Helena West Helena Police Officer has been charged and arrested, and is now facing a "Class A" misdemeanor charge of false imprisonment. Virgil Green, Chief of Police with the Helena West Helena Police Department stated in an agency press release. 41 year old Charles Byrd of Helena West Helena a patrol officer with the Helena West Helena Police Department since 2013, is now facing a Class A misdemeanor complaint related to an incident that occurred in October of 2016.

Green stated the investigation stem from a citizen filling a formal complaint against the Officer for false arrest and excessive force. Natavia Williams, of Helena West Helena alleged in her complaint the officer used excessive force while arresting her as she was walking to a doctor's

office in Helena on the morning of October 26, 2016. Williams stated in her complaint she had been bitten by a spider or some type of insect and her face was swollen, she was walking to the doctor for medical treatment when she encountered Officer Byrd in the area of Walnut and McDonough.

Chief Green, stated after reviewing the citizens complaint he placed Officer Byrd on paid administrative leave based upon the seriousness of the complaint. The agency began an internal investigation that was led by the Assistant Chief Ronald Scott. Green stated "when a citizen files a complaint against an officer the agency takes those complaints serious. We want our officers to be respectfully and courteous at all times when they are dealing with the public, we are not above the laws we enforce. Our goal is to ensure our officers are conducting themselves in a manner that's in accordance with our agency policies and procedures. "

Green stated after a very intensive internal investigation and interviewing other officers and witness the investigation determined Officer Byrd actions were not within department policies and procedures. The arrest and later unarrest of Williams was a violation of the agency arrest policy, and a violation of Williams civil rights.

Green stated on the morning of October 26, 2016 as Williams was walking down Walnut Street she posed no threat to the officer, she wasn't interfering with the officer's duties, she hadn't committed any crimes, she wasn't in any danger related to the nature of the call the officers were responding to. Officers had been dispatched to the area because a citizen had reported seeing several male juveniles running with weapons. Officers later took several juveniles into custody related to the call, Williams was just simply walking down a public street going to a doctor.



Green stated the agency reviewed all the information involved in the investigation and determined, this officer had violated the offense of false imprisonment or false arrest. A citizen has the right to walk down any city street and they shouldn't fear that an officer will arrest them, just because the officer refused to allow them to walk down a city street. When an officer cross that line as hard as it maybe, we have to be able to police ourselves. Green stated the agency submitted a probable cause affidavit to a District Judge, who found probable cause did exist based upon the affidavit to issue a warrant for Charles Byrd. The officer was informed of the charges, he has since been arrested and booked and released without bond.

Chief Green, future stated "it's imperative for the public to know that when these types of allegation arise and they file complaints with the agency were going to do the right thing. We must do everything we can to rebuild the public trust in their police department. Under my administration, I will not tolerate officers who abuse their powers and the authority they have been sworn to uphold, our job is to protect citizen's constitutional rights and to serve the public."

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