

Arrest Made in Hiawatha Chamber Theft Case

(KNZA)--A former Hiawatha Chamber of Commerce board member has been arrested, accused of embezzling funds from the organization.

According to a press release from Hiawatha Police Chief John Defore, 42-year-old Beth Mikita, of Hiawatha, was arrested Thursday on charges of felony theft, criminal use of a financial card and identity fraud following an investigation by the Police Department.

Defore says the charges allege unauthorized use of an account belonging to the Chamber over a period of several months.

Mikita formerly served as Treasurer for the Chamber Board, from February 2013 until May 2015. In a prepared statement, the Chamber of Commerce says the alleged theft was discovered during an extensive financial audit, and then reported to police.

Brown County Attorney Kevin Hill says a criminal inquisition was filed in Brown County District Court after the financial discrepancies were discovered.

Numerous subpoenas were issued as part of the inquisition, with Police Investigator Michael Gruber heading up the review of documents, and other evidence, including ATM surveillance videos.

Once the investigation was complete, Mikita was arrested.

Authorities didn't disclose the amount of money involved in the case, but court documents indicate it was between \$1,000 and \$10,000.

The Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors has issued the following statement regarding the case:

The Hiawatha Chamber of Commerce was notified Thursday, Nov. 19 by Hiawatha Police Department Investigator Mickey Gruber of the arrest of Beth Mikita, who had served as board treasurer of the Chamber from February 2013 until May 2015.

In June 2015, the board appointed Jake Wisdom, CPA, to the board to fill the position of treasurer and it was through his diligent inspection of the Chamber's accounts that numerous unauthorized financial transactions were discovered. These occurred between August 2014 and April 2015.

The Chamber provided this information to the HPD for further investigation. Beth Mikita has been charged with felony theft, unlawful use of a financial card and identity theft in connection with this investigation by the HPD. Brown County Attorney Kevin Hill is overseeing prosecution.

Hiawatha Chamber of Commerce Board

Carrie Potter

Mike Twombly

Jake Wisdom

Joey May

Sarah Davies

Mike Grier

Seth Tollefson

Many Signals Communications