

THE MORNING CALL

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Pawlowski prison sentencing LOCAL NEWS

PAWLOWSKI

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criminals than public servants as they engaged in pay-to-play politics. Pawlowski looked stunned. His wife, Lisa, who had asked the judge to be lenient, wiped tears from her eyes. His daughter, Mercy, cried softly. After Pawlowski was taken from the courtroom, a marshal handed Lisa Pawlowski her husband's necklace, belt and wallet. Sanchez said it is unfortunate that Pawlowski's family will suffer due to his sentence, but that the consequence flows from his actions and no one else's.

Pawlowski's prison term will be followed by three years of supervised release. He must also pay nearly \$90,000 in restitution. Briefly addressing Sanchez before the sentencing, Pawlowski offered no apology as he said he never imagined facing prison after a lifetime of public service.

"It is one small way I thought I could make a difference and change the world," he said. "That brought him years of sleepless nights in Allentown, worrying about the city and how he could bring it back."

"When he finally had the opportunity to tell the court, to tell his family, to tell everyone how sorry he was for what he did and show some remorse, he didn't do it," Lappen said. "The court recognized that in the sentence's imposed."

McMahon said the sentence was excessive for Pawlowski's crimes. "We know that he was going to be incarcerated. We know he was going to get a substantial amount of time," McMahon said. "But that amount of time was simply cruel."

McMahon said Pawlowski has steadfastly maintained he did nothing wrong and that it would be disingenuous to prosecute if he is innocent. "I would be more offended if it was the judge if he got up and said, 'I'm sorry,' because then that means you were trying to con us all along," McMahon said.

"He left remorseful, because he says he didn't do it," McMahon said. "I'm very confident that Pawlowski's appeal will be successful."

The 46 witnesses called by McMahon - Pawlowski's family and a slate of friends and other supporters reflecting the city's diversity - praised Pawlowski as a charitable man of deep religious convictions and praised him for leading the beleaguered city's revival. There were so many witnesses that McMahon began bringing them before the judge in groups of five. Some were from the Latino community and spoke through an interpreter. Many said they were among the 478 people who voted for Pawlowski in the last election despite his indictment.

McMahon described Pawlowski's behavior as "aberrant" and unlike other political



PHOTOS BY APRIL SANEZ/THE MORNING CALL McMahon called the 10-year sentence 'simply cruel' and said he was confident that Pawlowski will be vindicated on appeal.

He called Pawlowski's lack of apology or contrition in his statements to the court astounding. "When he finally had the opportunity to tell the court, to tell his family, to tell everyone how sorry he was for what he did and show some remorse, he didn't do it," Lappen said. "The court recognized that in the sentence's imposed."

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Douglas U.S. Attorney Louis Lappen says Tuesday's sentence should send the message to public officials to put the citizens first.

corruption cases that have captured headlines in recent years. Prosecutors previously requested dropping five wire fraud charges, saying insufficient evidence was presented at trial. And on Monday, Sanchez granted Pawlowski's motion for acquittal on four charges from an alleged scheme to lie work for the Stevens & Lee law firm to campaign contributions.

McMahon argued the evidence didn't prove bribery under the U.S. Supreme Court's decision reversing former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell's bribery conviction. That established there must be a clear agreement that the elected official must perform an "official act" in exchange for the donation. Setting up a meeting with the city solicitor to discuss getting legal work is not an official act, McMahon said.

"This is the unbridled Mr. Pawlowski. This doesn't sound like the religious man described here in the courtroom or the common man or the legend described in those letters," Woorek said.

He said Pawlowski used money from donors who received city business to try to buy himself a seat in the U.S. Senate. "These are serious offenses, your honor, motivated by ambition and a thirst for status and power," Woorek said. While Pawlowski was convicted of 47 counts in March, he was only sentenced on 38. Prosecutors

Outside the courthouse, many gathered before the hearing in support of the four-term mayor, with some forming a prayer circle. Blanche Perez was with a group holding signs that read: "Thank you for the transformation of Allentown" and "You are the best mayor of Allentown."

"Not everyone was a supporter. A man in an orange jumpsuit labeled 'Red Ed, inmate' stood outside the courthouse with a sign: 'Ed Pawlowski for Prison.'"

In a statement, Allentown Mayor Ray O'Connell credited Pawlowski with significant accomplishments, adding, "But a jury found that his actions tied to his political ambition ran afoul of the law."

"The sentence imposed by Judge Sanchez today closes another chapter in that tale," the statement said. "We are trying to put that past by working hard every day to restore the public's faith in Allentown city government."

In factoring Pawlowski's sentence, the probation office concluded that his crimes cost the victims \$1.6 million, taking into account the trouble-litigated Cedar Beach Pool recreation, a contract. Pawlowski was convicted of receiving a company whose principal he solicited for a donation.

Instead, both sides agreed that Pawlowski's crimes cost about \$108,000. That reduced the sentence recommended under federal guidelines from 30 years to life to the 10 to 15-plus years prosecutors requested.

Sanchez rejected Pawlowski's objections to the sentencing report's finding that he obstructed justice. McMahon argued Pawlowski was not aware of the federal investigation when he ordered others in his circle to delete messages from campaign strategist Stan Ruchewicz. But Sanchez found numerous occasions where Pawlowski's actions demonstrated that he was worried about being re-elected. Those included having his office sweep for listening devices and installing his assistants speak to him only in elevators or outdoors. Court documents revealed Ruchewicz was recording conversations for the government. Pawlowski was convicted in March after a nearly six-week trial of trading city contracts for campaign donations to fund his bids for mayor, governor and U.S. senator. Jurors found him guilty in eight schemes, including those involving contracts for the pool, tax collection service, cybersecurity and streetlight installation. The jury returned guilty verdicts to charges of conspiracy, bribery, mail and wire fraud and making false statements to the FBI.

Michelle Martin, Laurie Mason, Schneider, David Porwick, Sheehan and Evelyn Dwyer contributed to this story.

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