Registered sex offender in Lexington accused of raping 17-year-old girl

BY CHRISTOPHER LEACH
cleach@herald-leader.com

A Lexington man who is a registered sex offender was arrested and charged with rape Wednesday, July 23, according to court documents.

Jimmie Stewart, 63, allegedly had "deviate sexual intercourse" with a 17-year-old girl, court documents indicate. He also sexually touched the girl without her consent. It is unclear when the alleged incident occurred.

Stewart is charged with third-degree rape, third-degree sexual abuse and third-degree sodomy, according to court records. He is being held in the Fayette County Detention Center on a $50,000 bond, as of July 29.

Stewart's case was sent to a Fayette County grand jury July 28.

Stewart is a lifetime registered sex offender after being found guilty of rape, sodomy, unlawful imprisonment and burglary in 1988. Court records indicate he was sentenced to 60 years in prison for the crimes.

In December 2001, Stewart was released from prison and placed on parole by the Kentucky Parole Board, according to Price Wilburn, the communications adviser for the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet. While on parole, he returned to custody twice for violations before being released on parole again.

Stewart was most recently released from custody and placed on parole in March 2020, according to Wilburn.

The Herald-Leader has reached out to Stewart's attorney for a request for comment.

Christopher Leach, cleach @herald-leader.com

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tion of farmland. A registered nurse, Gorton is the mother of two children and has five grandchildren. She is married to Charlie Gorton, a retired Major General in the Army

GROWTH BOUNDARY FIGHT PLAYS INTO POLITICAL RACES

Debate over the growth boundary has long been contentious and a centerpiece of the city's mayoral and council races. It has also meant some candidates are financially supported by developers and business leaders and others get donations from those who support farm preservation.

The urban service boundary may not feature as prominently in the mayor's race this year as it has in prior years.

The council voted in 2023 to expand the boundary. The city is set to add more than 2,800 acres to the city's growth boundary. It is the first time land had been added for development since 1996.

GORTON HAS EASILY BEATEN BETTER-FUNDED CANDIDATES

Gorton has proved to be a formidable candidate, winning by double-digits over opponents who have outraised and outspent her.

Gorton, who served 16 years on the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council, four of those as vice mayor, was first elected in 2018 when then Mayor Jim Gray opted not to seek a third term.

She easily bested former Lexington Police Chief Ronnie Bastin, winning 63% of the vote in November 2018.

In 2022, Gorton trounced first-term Councilman David Kloiber, winning 71% of the vote.

In that race, Gorton's support was city-wide, a Lexington Herald-Leader analysis of precinct data shows. She won all the city's precincts and tied with Kloiber in one rural precinct.

Kloiber also outspent Gorton nearly two to one. Kloiber had a campaign war chest that topped $640,000, according to Kentucky Registry of Election Finance reports. Much of that money he pumped into attack advertisements, criticizing Gorton's record on crime.

Gorton, meanwhile, raised slightly more than $150,000, campaign finance reports show.

A HISTORIC RACE FOR A THIRD TERM

Former Mayor Scotty Baesler ran and won a third term but ultimately did not serve the full four years because he successfully ran and won a seat in the U.S. Congress. Baesler served as mayor from 1982 to 1993.

If Gorton is elected and serves the full third term, she will be the first Lexington mayor to run and do so.

Gorton is a registered nurse who grew up south of Columbus in the farming community of Circleville, Ohio, the self-proclaimed "Pumpkin Capital of the World." She's lived in Lexington since 1979.

She has often pointed to her long history in city government and firm grasp on the city's finances as reasons why Lexington voters have continued to send her back to city hall.

She has also touted her leadership and work ethic after the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, successfully leading the city during the first global pandemic in 100 years. The city has not only rebounded by thrived in recent years, Gorton has said.

In the news release announcing her decision to seek a third term, Gorton also pointed to multiple projects and capital improvements that she has pushed through including the construction of Cardinal Run North, the first new regional park in Lexington in 26 years, off of Parkers Mill Road.

A second senior center and therapeutic recreation center in Shillito Park is set to open 2026.

She has also invested in technology and improvements for the city's police department, focused on jobs and recruitment of jobs. The city recently started construction on the Legacy Business Park off of Georgetown Street and has also entered into an interlocal agreement for a three-county business park in Madison County.

But Gorton has also struggled in the past six years to find a new permanent home for city government. The city has been searching for a new home for decades.

In April, the city announced it was entering negotiations with the Lexington Opportunity Fund for a lease for a new city government center at Vine and Upper streets in the former BB&T bank building.

In a Wednesday interview, Gorton said she sought a third term in part to complete various projects, including finding a new home for city government.

"We are in negotiations and close to finishing those negotiations," Gorton said of a new city government building.

Other things on Gorton's to-do list include appointing a new task force, consisting of providers, business people and community members, to tackle the rise in homelessness. Annual counts of homelessness in Lexington show an increase in homelessness this year. On top of that, President Donald Trump's administration is proposing dramatic cuts to federal housing vouchers which helps low-income people pay for rent in the next federal budget.

"We need to look at this differently and find new, innovative solutions," Gorton said. "People in low-income housing now are working people who may fall off into homelessness, something that we do not want to happen."

Gorton said people have asked her since she was elected in 2022 to her second term whether she was going to run for a third and final term. Gorton said she ultimately decided that she loved the job.

"I love my job. I'm a good fit for it," Gorton said. "My team and I have accomplished a lot since the COVID pandemic."

Gorton said it's experience and the long list of accomplishments that set her apart from Carter, a first-time candidate.

"Look at my record and what I have accomplished. It's a lot. It's big things and small things," Gorton said. It takes years and lots of relationships to build that type of track record and public trust, she said.

Carter said it was time for new leadership and new ideas. Gorton was first elected in 1999 to serve on the council.

"My focus as mayor would be on the future and on taking the necessary actions to achieve significant change. I am ready to lead with the energy and urgency to act that is required. I would prioritize adequate housing, business innovation and ensuring everyone has access to the opportunities Lexington has to offer," Carter said. "I am not a politician, but a local business owner who grew up here, graduated from our public schools and is raising my family here. We need a leader to build a future and not just manage the present."

Gorton's relationship with the 15-member council has always been cordial, but the council and the two-term mayor have had differences in some areas including spending and the expansion of the urban service boundary over the past seven years.

In June 2024, Gorton vetoed 10 positions the council added to the budget. At the time, Gorton said the city had to live within its means and did not feel the positions should be added at the time. The council ultimately voted to override her veto.

Beth Musgrave, bmusgrave @herald-leader.com

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dents; more long-term substitute teachers, transportation cuts, deferred building maintenance and technology rollbacks.

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There also could be challenging outcomes for high poverty schools and students with disabilities. The long-term risks, Barber said, are lower achievement, higher dropout rates and a weaker local workforce.

The bottom line, Barber said: "We cannot sustain competitive salaries, absorb inflation, or deliver the education our students deserve without new revenue."

The district has a shortfall, Barber said, because "as your costs rise and your revenues are flat, costs and expenditures are outpacing revenue."

"If we aren't bringing enough revenue we can't cover the rising costs," he said. "It's not that we are spending more money on more things, it's the rising costs."

In June, Superintendent Demetrus Liggins discussed the reasons for the shortfall with the Herald-Leader.

"There is no need to guess or speculate about the cause of the projected $16 million shortfall; it is well-documented and based on financial analysis and predictive factors," he said.

"First, this is a projection for the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, not the current year. The FY2025 budget is balanced, and we remain in strong financial standing today," Liggins said.

Liggins said looking ahead, the district faces increased costs driven by inflation, ongoing investments in competitive teacher and staff salaries, and the expiration of federal pandemic relief funds.

"These pressures are not unique to Fayette County," he said. 'School districts across the country are grappling with the same realities. This is a structural challenge, not a result of financial mismanagement, and we are addressing it with thoughtful planning and community engagement."

The recommendations that will go to the school board in August in the order of preference by the budget work group were:

Take the full $16 million out of the $42 million contingency fund, or only keep 4 percent of the budget in the contingency fund, not the current 6 percent.

Freeze any spending not contractually obligated. Charge the district with making up the rest of the cuts from administrative ranks, without affecting teachers.

Other recommendations: Initiate a sponsorship program for particular programs, sections of buildings and other public-private partnerships. Reduce school maintenance costs by $1.7 million to $2 million. Liquidate real estate and other assets.

The final least-preferred recommendations: Reduce maintenance costs, increase lunch prices, raise the Occupational License Tax rate.

Raising the occupational license tax rate was a controversial proposal recently put on hold earlier this summer after some board members and Lexington residents said the school district tried to push the measure on the community without an extensive discussion.

According to an opinion from Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman, proper notice was not given and a public hearing was not held when school board chair Tyler Murphy, vice-chair Amy Green and board member Penny Christian asked the fiscal court to increase the tax rate from 0.5% to 0.75%.

After that ruling, state auditor Allison Ball decided to conduct a special examination of the district.

Barber told the work group Tuesday night the occupational license tax is a local payroll and business tax, paid by people who live and work in Fayette County.

It applies to net profits of businesses operating in the county, and is withheld from paychecks or filed by self-employed individuals, Barber said.

All of the revenue from the tax supports Fayette County Public Schools, he said.

Someone making an annual $66,000 salary, under the proposed rate increase, would pay $495 annually instead of $330, or $6.35 more per paycheck.

People who only live or only work in the county are exempt from the tax.

What happens next?

The budget solutions work group's recommendations will be sent to the school board. Board members will likely review them in August.

Valarie Honeycutt Spears, vhoneycutt @herald-leader.com