

Published on HamptonRoads.com | PilotOnline.com (<http://hamptonroads.com>)

Embezzlement case against party planner dropped

CHESAPEAKE

A prosecutor Thursday decided not to try embezzlement charges against the owner of Carpe Diem Concierge Services over an aborted trip and Playboy Playmate party in Dubai, telling a Circuit Court judge that the complaining witnesses didn't want him to pursue the case.

Kristin R. Cassen, the owner and party planner, said afterward she had hoped for an outright dismissal on the case's merits. She and her lawyer have contended her differences with two local businessmen were, if anything, a civil contractual matter.

Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Derek Wagner declined to comment after the brief hearing. His decision means the indictments against Cassen are dismissed, but another grand jury could bring the same charges later.

Carpe Diem advertises as arranging discreet, upscale diversions for traveling celebrities and professionals in entertainment and sports, such as private parties, golf outings, concert tickets, nanny services and bachelor parties.

Kenneth "Kent" Basnight and John Babb told police they agreed with Cassen in early 2009 to arrange a \$75,000 group trip to Dubai that, court documents and interviews showed, would feature golf, real-estate pitches and Playboy models socializing at a party.

The trip didn't happen, and Basnight and Babb complained that they had to pay credit-card expenses incurred by Cassen. But Cassen said she had upheld her end of the deal, and the two businessmen failed to attract enough guests to cover the costs. Still, a grand jury indicted her in April.

"This morning's outcome," Cassen's lawyer, Fred Taylor, said outside the courtroom, "speaks to the fact that this shouldn't be here."

Babb later declined to comment, and Basnight didn't return a phone call.

Matthew Bowers, (757) 222-5221, matthew.bowers@pilotonline.com

Source URL (retrieved on 10/25/2010 - 10:42): <http://hamptonroads.com/2010/10/embezzlement-case-against-party-planner-dropped-0>