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February 12, 2019

NEWS RELEASE

**HASTINGS SCHOOL OFFICIAL CHARGED WITH MULTIPLE COUNTS
OF EMBEZZLEMENT AND THEFT OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom announced that **Joshua Gerald McLay**, age 37 of Hastings, has been charged* with eight counts of Embezzlement of Public Funds and eight counts of Theft by Swindle in connection with the alleged theft of over \$13,900 from Independent School District #200 in Hastings. At the time of the alleged thefts, McLay was working as the Hastings High School Head Wrestling Coach. He has also served as the Hastings High School Assistant Principal since July 1, 2016.

The criminal complaint alleges that in an email dated September 13, 2011, McLay advised the Hastings School District's Accounting Supervisor that he was bringing his coaching staff to Lincoln, Nebraska for a coaching clinic at the end of October and wished to pay for gas, a van, and hotel rooms for two nights for those attending. He also mentioned that he wanted to treat the coaches to the Nebraska football game and was wondering if that would be possible. The Accounting Supervisor advised him that the travel expenses (gas, hotel and van) were okay for a coaches clinic, but entertainment expenses were not.

The criminal complaint alleges that McLay used school district funds to purchase college football game tickets for multiple individuals who were said to be attending a "wrestling coaches clinic" in 2012 (Iowa State University football game); 2013 (University of Wisconsin-Madison football game); 2014 (University of Minnesota football game); and 2018 (University of Notre Dame football game). Also purchased for multiple individuals said to be attending a "wrestling coaches clinic" were various expenses for car rentals, hotel rooms, gas for rented vehicles, food and other expenses related to trips in 2011 (to Nebraska); 2012 (to Iowa); 2013 (to Wisconsin); 2014 (to Minneapolis); 2015, 2016 and 2017 (to Florida); and 2018 (to Indiana). The investigation revealed that some of the expenses for these events were charged by McLay to a Hastings School District credit card and other expenses were paid directly by him for which he was reimbursed.

The investigation revealed that all of the above expenses were claimed to be for coaches clinics, but that no coaches clinics took place on any of these trips.

Additional facts pertaining to this case can be found in the criminal complaint, which is located online at: <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/LawJustice/CriminalComplaint/Pages/default.aspx>. No mug shot is available because the Defendant is not in custody.

Backstrom commented: "*Any allegation involving theft of public funds is always a serious matter.*"

Backstrom thanked the Hastings Police Department for their thorough investigation in this case and Independent School District #200 for their assistance.

McLay has been charged by summons in this case and will be making his first court appearance on April 8, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. in Hastings.

If you have questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4438.

*Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant/suspect is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.