

# Megan Barry's former bodyguard allowed to keep firearm as part of unusual plea deal

Anita Wadhvani, USA TODAY NETWORK - Tennessee Published 8:00 a.m. CT April 19, 2018  
Sgt. Rob Forrest walks into Metro jail to be booked on a felony theft charge on March 6, 2018  
Shelley Mays/USA TODAY NETWORK - Tennessee



(Photo: Larry McCormack / The Tennessean)

Rob Forrest Jr., the bodyguard who pleaded guilty to felony theft in connection to his longstanding affair with former Mayor Megan Barry, is allowed to carry a firearm — an unusual probation condition not typically afforded to other defendants.

Forrest, through his attorney David Raybin, negotiated the terms of his plea agreement, which allows him the right to own and carry a weapon, with the district attorney's office.

The March 6 agreement said that Forrest would be allowed "to carry a firearm given that he is a retired police officer" in part so he could work to pay for his restitution of \$45,000.

"It is Mr. Forrest's intention to apply for security posts in the city so that he can earn money to pay his restitution, pay his court costs, and otherwise be gainfully employed," the agreement said.

Forrest paid the entire \$45,000 one week after the plea deal was signed.

"If Rob Forrest violates the conditions of his probation, he will not be able to expunge his conviction and will lose his right to carry a gun forever," a statement from the District Attorney's office said. "We evaluate each case on its own merits. We considered that Forrest did not commit a violent crime and that he is seeking employment in the security field, consistent with his work experience for the past 31 years."

"I don't know of any other police officer who leaves his job with a felony that can carry a weapon," said Clifford Mann, a retired police officer who served for 35 years and now is a member of the Nashville Peace Officers Association, which advocates for minority officers. "We don't understand why this particular officer got this privilege."

Raybin acknowledged it was not a standard condition of a felony plea deal.

"We asked the judge to waive that, and the district attorney agreed so he got it," Raybin said. "He has to work to earn money," he said. "Just because he has paid his court costs and restitution doesn't mean he doesn't need to be employed."

Raybin declined to discuss whether Forrest is currently employed and said Forrest would not agree to an interview.

Forrest retired from the Metro Nashville Police Department on Jan. 31 after serving 31 years, including 14 years supervising the mayoral security detail.

That same day, Barry admitted she and Forrest had engaged in a nearly two-year affair. During the affair, Barry and Forrest traveled together, with no other city staff present, on 10 out-of-town trips.

Forrest earned \$173,843.13 in overtime from July 2015 through Jan. 15, according to city data. He earned far less in overtime pay during the tenure of former Mayor Karl Dean, records show. An affidavit made public last month detailed nude photos on Forrest's phone of a woman assumed to be Barry. The photos were taken during two of the trips and had time stamps that corresponded to time when Forrest was on duty, according to payroll records.

He pleaded "conditionally guilty" to theft of over \$10,000, a felony, on March 6 — the same day Barry pleaded guilty to the same charge and resigned from office.

Forrest admitted he had improperly received more than \$10,000 in city compensation "for time he reported as work hours which were actually personal time with Megan Barry," according to a statement from the district attorney's office.

If Forrest adheres to the terms of his probation, his guilty plea will be vacated and criminal record will be expunged. As soon as Forrest paid restitution, he ceased to be on supervised probation and does not have to report to a probation officer.

His last paycheck included overtime and 63 days of accrued vacation and personal leave that added to an estimated \$27,400, according to an email obtained through a public records request by the USA TODAY NETWORK – Tennessee.

Forrest retired with an estimated \$74,000 taxpayer-funded annual pension — a figure that was inflated in part due to overtime accrued during his affair with Barry. A board that oversees city pensions last month indicated it would reduce Forrest's pension by \$45,000 but has not yet made a formal decision.