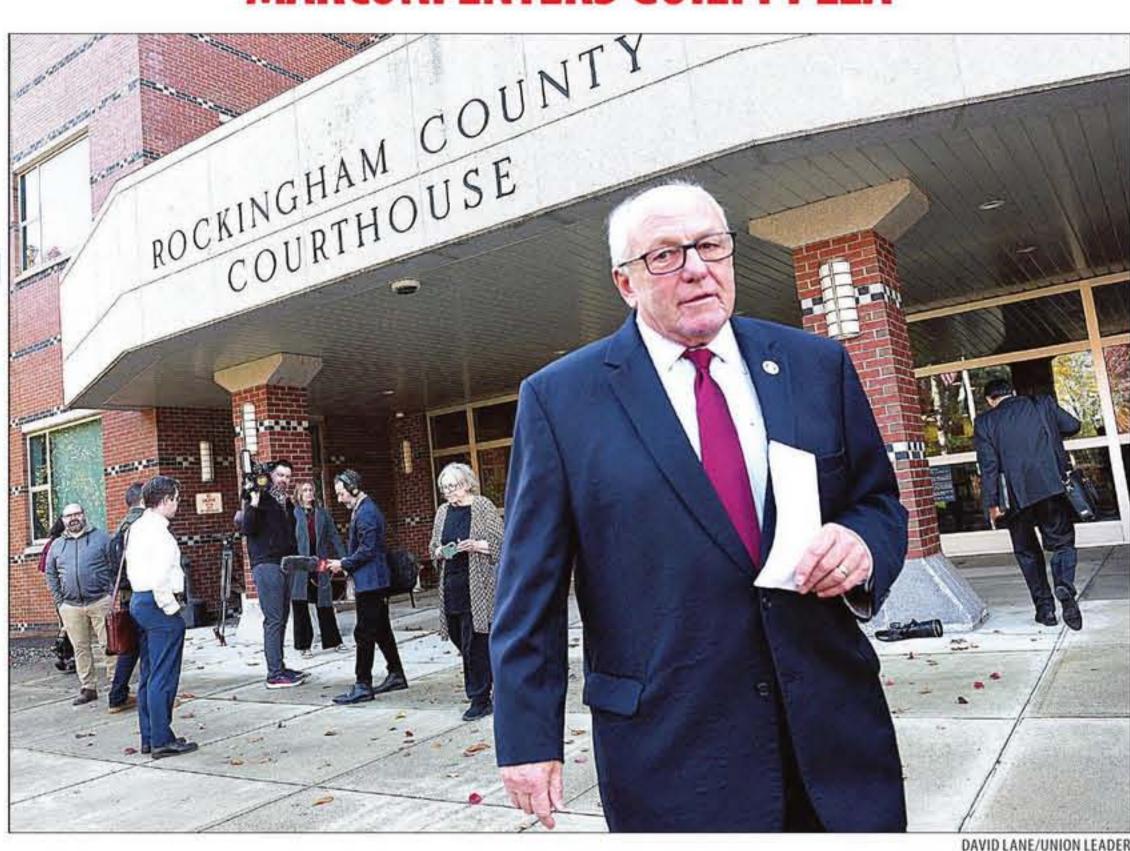
MARCONI ENTERS GUILTY PLEA



Geno Marconi leaves Rockingham County Superior Court after speaking to the media Friday following his guilty plea to a charge of violating motor vehicle record confidentiality.

'No nefarious purpose'

Ports director pleads to single charge and resigns; victim alleges 'sophisticated, organized criminal enterprise'



Neil Levesque arrives for Geno Marconi's plea and sentencing hearing at Rockingham County Superior Court. Illegal access to Levesque's motor vehicle records were at the center of the misdemeanor charge to which Marconi pleaded guilty.

By Jonathan Phelps Union Leader Staff

Longtime Ports and Harbors Director Geno Marconi admitted Friday morning individual's the chairman of an advisory council — but said it had nothing to do with malice.

tim, Neil Levesque, claimed after the seven-minute Marconi had acted in retaliation against him. Levesque is a member of the Board of Directors for the Pease Development Authority, which oversees the state's port authority.

"I was subpoenaed to testify before the grand jury to

testify to what I knew, and I complied with my duty to provide that testimony," Levesque said. "I was subsequently the victim of retaliation as I, and others, to illegally handing over an worked to disclose what confidential I believe to be a sophistimotor vehicle records to cated, organized criminal enterprise, run by the defendant."

Marconi, 74, was able to After the hearing, the vic- walk out of the courtroom hearing at Rockingham County Superior Court with a 30-day jail term, suspended if he remains on good behavior for a year. Marconi agreed to resign from his position and hold no paid

See Marconi, Page A6

Page A6 • NEW HAMPSHIRE SUNDAY NEWS • November 1/2, 2025

Marconi

or volunteer positions with the Pease Development Authority.

The plea to a single count of violating the Driver Privacy Act puts an end to the case, which included two felony and four misdemeanor charges against Marconi. All other changes have been dropped.

Prosecutor Dan Jimenez told Judge David Ruoff he believes the plea is "fair and just resolution."

Marconi has no prior record. The charge contended that Marconi intentionally and unlawfully disclosed Leveque's information in violation of the Driver Privacy Act, according to the Attorney General's Office. The trial in the case was set

to last three or four days. "Public service is a privilege and responsibility, not a right," Attorney General John Formella said in a statement. "Every public official must be held to a high standard and comply with the law."

Marconi told Ruoff he understands his actions and takes responsibility.

After the hearing, Marconi read a brief statement admitting he provided copies of "one individual's" motor vehicle records, along with associated fishing and pier permits, to Bradley Cook of Hampton, then-chairman of the Division of Ports and Harbors Advisory Council. Marconi said he believed at the time the members of the council had legal authority to review those documents.

"This action was done without malice and with no nefarious purpose," he said in a statement he read aloud. "I always considered myself an honest, law-abiding citizen."

A case against Cook alleging perjury and false swearing is still pending. A jury trial is scheduled for January also in Rockingham.

Marconi said the investigation, which lasted four years, included months of grand jury proceedings and a review of more than 33,000 pages of discovery.

Marconi, who has been on administrative leave, said he intended to retire last year. "With this resolution and after four decades of public service, I have ended my employment, so that I may now retire and move forward."

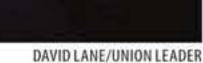
The criminal conviction won't have an impact on Marconi's pension, according to state law. Employees must file for retirement between 30 and 90 days before their retirement date. Information on his benefits won't be made available until after he officially retires.

thority and the port authority are

The Pease Development Au-



Geno Marconi leaves court following his guilty plea at Rockingham County Superior Court in Brentwood on Friday.





DAVID LANE/UNION LEADER

Geno Marconi reads a statement outside of the courthouse following his guilty plea Friday.

the defendants in a lawsuit filed by Rye Harbor Lobster Pound against the Pease Development Authority, which allege PDA and the Port Authority implemented

"harsh, anti-business policies" that "specifically target Rye Harbor Lobster Pound due to its competition with Marconi and other businesses aligned with him in of soliciting then-Gov. Chris Su-

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GENO MARCONI

Rye Harbor State Marina." Judge Daniel Will in Hillsbor-

ough County Superior Court in Manchester is considering several motions to dismiss the lawsuit. The AG's Office says none of the plaintiffs' claims has legs. Marconi's plea comes as his

wife New Hampshire Supreme Court Justice Anna Barbara Hantz Marconi earlier this month pleaded no contest in Merrimack County Superior Court to a charge

nunu "to secure a governmental privilege and/or advantage" in an investigation into her husband. Jimenez reiterated during a

press briefing that justice has been served in both cases. "One is a long-serving public

official. The other is a Supreme Court justice," he said. "They're both now convicted."

Levesque, who is also director of the New Hampshire Institute of Politics at Saint Anselm College, said he was looking over his shoulder as the investigation played out over the past four years. He hopes the full results of the investigation are released to the public as soon as possible.

"Geno Marconi was also aided by many high-profile people who decided it was in their best interest to look away rather than seek justice for the public. If we are going to have the kind of government the people of this state deserve, then people in power need to be willing to call out misconduct when they see it," he said. "And the people who do that in good faith like I did, need to be protected against retaliation."

jphelps@unionleader.com