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## Theft charge for Baldwin

BY DAVID LINTON SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

**MANSFIELD** - Selectmen Chairwoman Ann Baldwin is facing charges she embezzled money from a former employer by inflating the hours she worked as an office manager and submitted false claims to the state to receive unemployment compensation.

Baldwin, 36, is accused of embezzling more than \$47,500 during the four-year period she worked part time at Pediatric Dental Center of Mansfield on South Main Street, according to a report by state police assigned to the Bristol County District Attorney's Office.

Baldwin, of 199 Union St. Extension, is also accused of fraudulently receiving \$2,680 in unemployment checks from 2005 to 2006, allegedly by underreporting her part-time income from the dental office, according to the police report.

Baldwin, who was summonsed to appear for arraignment Friday in Attleboro District Court, is disputing claims she embezzled the money.

She told investigators she was a salaried employee, rather than an hourly worker, according to the state police report.

She faces two felony larceny charges and a charge of filing a false statement to receive unemployment compensation, according to court records.

Baldwin, who was elected to the board of selectmen in September 2006 and is currently the chairwoman, could not be reached by The Sun Chronicle Monday for comment. Her term expires this spring.

Her lawyer, Glen Hannington of Boston, said Baldwin will plead innocent at her arraignment.

"I haven't seen the allegations and I really can't comment until such time," Hannington said.

The charges are the result of an investigation by state police detectives assigned to the Bristol County District Attorney's Office.



*Ann Baldwin campaigns in the Mansfield High School parking lot in 2007. (Staff file photo by Tom Maguire)*

Baldwin worked part time at the dental office from December 2005 to April 2009. She was fired after the owner, Dr. Robert Moreau, discovered the alleged financial improprieties and other irregularities in his business records, according to the police report.

Moreau told investigators that Baldwin was an hourly employee and allegedly overstated the amount of time she actually worked. The dentist estimated that Baldwin was overpaid by \$47,576 after examining four years of records, according to the police report.

Baldwin denied she was overpaid and claimed she had the documents to prove she was on a salary, but could not access them because her computer hard drive crashed, according to the police report.

She did recover an e-mail she claimed supported her contention she was a salaried employee and, therefore, could not inflate the hours she worked, but Dr. Moreau denied Baldwin ever became a salaried employee, according to police.

"Pediatric Dental continues to allege that Baldwin was an hourly employee and consistently over-reported her hours as a form of embezzlement," police stated in the report.

Baldwin's computer was taken when state police executed the search warrant of her home last Wednesday in an attempt to resolve the employment dispute.

The computer will be analyzed as part of the investigation. State police say experts can often recover even deleted documents, according to the police report.

Authorities also seized five computer CDs and a floppy disk in addition to a W-2 form from the dental office to Baldwin for the 2008 tax year, according to the search warrant.

When state police interviewed Baldwin, she allegedly admitted to stealing an estimated \$5,300 by making out checks from the business payable to herself on several occasions, and that shortly after her termination she paid back \$4,700, according to the police report.

State police recovered a \$853 check from her vehicle. The company check was made out to Baldwin but was never cashed, according to the police report.

Baldwin allegedly told state police she took the money because she fell behind on her mortgage payments and unsuccessfully tried to get a loan at one point from an Internet-based company by using one of the dental office's corporate credit cards to pay the application fee, according to the police report.

Moreau also told police the petty cash drawer in the office was also depleted and replenished with no receipts or explanations of how the money was spent, and that business credit cards were used improperly, according to the police report.

Moreau and his wife Susan initially contacted Mansfield police alleging Baldwin had been stealing money from the business. However, Mansfield police referred the case to the state Attorney General's Office, which referred it to the Bristol County District Attorney's Office.

Before she was elected to the board of selectmen in 2006, Baldwin was on the town board of assessors.

If convicted, the maximum penalty for each charge is a five-year prison term. Baldwin also faces fines of up to \$25,000.