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Entertainment

Business

Restaurants &amp; Food

Living

Video

Classifieds

Shopping

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Nation

World

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Weird News

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Health

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## Former chief pays hard price James Leason, arrested in a brothel raid, is fined \$15,000 and will spend a year on probation.

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August 07, 2004 | By Joel Bewley INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Former Runnemede Police Chief James Leason was fined \$15,000 and given a year of probation yesterday for his arrest earlier this year during the raid of a Maple Shade brothel.

Leason, 56, also was banned from holding public office or a government job in New Jersey.

In June, he pleaded guilty to official misconduct under a deal that dropped a charge of promoting prostitution.

Leason sobbed yesterday as he gave a brief statement to Judge John A. Almeida in Superior Court in Mount Holly.

"I'm sorry for putting my family and kids through this," he said.

A veteran of the U.S. Coast Guard, Leason served on the Runnemede police force for 31 years, including 17 as chief.

He was arrested Jan. 26 in the parking lot of the Arbors Apartments on South Lenola Road. An investigation by the Burlington County Prosecutor's Office revealed that this was not his first time at the brothel. Five weeks after his arrest, he retired.

Almeida told Leason that he remembers being a little boy and having admiration for his local police chief.

"People looked up to a person in his position and wanted people like him to be the embodiment of what was right," he told Leason. "You, as a result of this self-indulgent and unlawful act, have embarrassed yourself, your family and your profession."

The raid was conducted with the help of an informant, who made 50 phone calls to Leason over eight months to trying to persuade him to visit the brothel, according to Stephen Raymond, Leason's attorney.

The informant, who is working with investigators on other cases, wore a wire and recorded Leason's visit.

Raymond said Leason was remorseful and had "suffered a great deal of humiliation."

"In this particular case, he made a huge mistake for which he is paying dearly," Raymond said. "It is not reflective of his life nor his service to the community."

Leason was ordered to return \$3,500 in raises and pension contributions to the borough. Saying that his client was not paid the entire amount of those funds, Raymond plans to ask the court to base the restitution on the actual amount received.

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