

officer on patrol at the mall Saturday to conduct those things," Denhup was arraigned on charges of fourth-degree sexual assault, risk of injury to a minor

# 3 North Haven officials arraigned

By Ann Demattio  
Assistant Metro Editor

**MERIDEN** — Three North Haven officials were arraigned in Superior Court Monday in the first of what could be many trips to the courthouse.

Community Services and Recreation Director Joseph J. Ierardi and his wife, Assistant Director Patricia C. Ierardi, had no comment after leaving the courtroom, where they appeared before Judge Mark Taylor.

Their cases were continued to May 17, as was the case of town Finance Director Vincent E. Palmeri Jr., who was arrested by the chief state's attorney's office a day before the Ierardis, April 3.

Joseph Ierardi, 62, was charged with second-degree larceny, second-degree aiding larceny, second-degree forgery, tampering with a witness, tampering with physical evidence and third-degree hindering prosecution.

He is accused of embezzling funds from the community services and recreation department, submitting false travel vouchers and asking others to destroy evidence when he learned of the investigation.

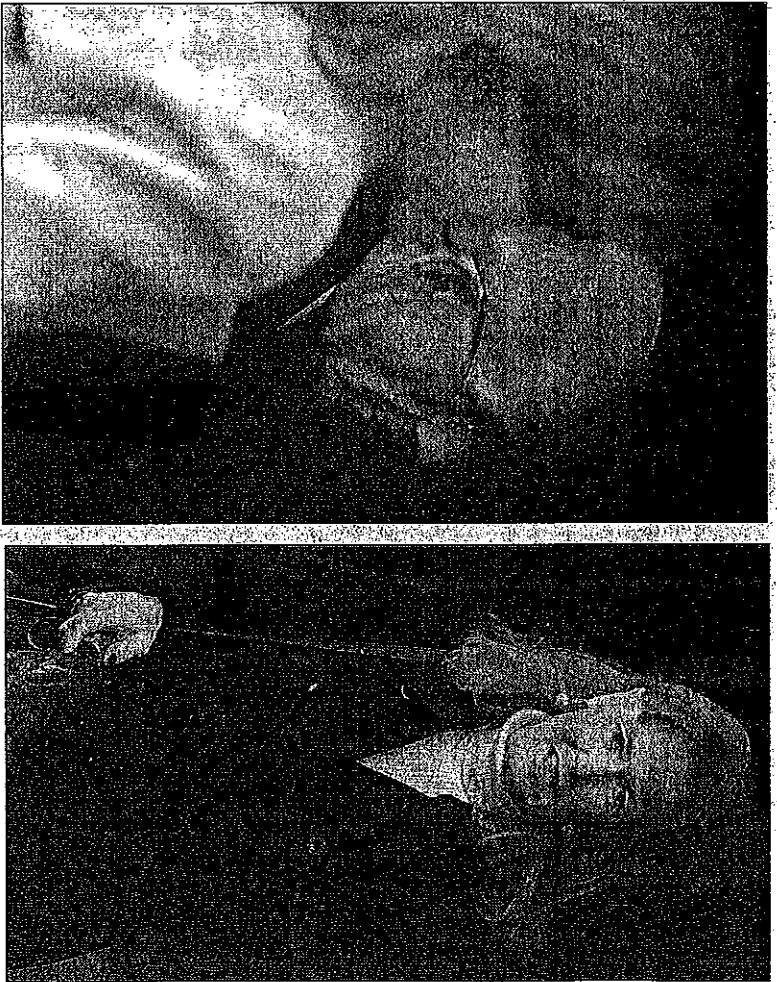
Patricia Ierardi, 58, is charged with second-degree larceny and tampering with a witness. According to arrest warrants, Joseph Ierardi allegedly made it a practice to approve bogus overtime for his wife and arranged for some of his employees to request payment for overtime they did not work.

Palmeri, 65, charged with tampering with physical evidence, conspiracy to do so and third-degree hindering prosecution, is accused of conspiring with Joseph Ierardi to conceal a travel voucher Ierardi had asked him to rescind.

And it was that matter that Palmeri's attorney, William M. Bloss, spoke about after Palmeri was arraigned Monday.

Bloss, of the Bridgeport firm of Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder, said Palmeri provided hundreds of documents to investigators from the chief state's attorney's Public Integrity Bureau, "voluntarily" without subpoena ... and the charge here is that one page

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LEFT: Tara Knight, who represents Patricia Ierardi, and Ierardi's husband, Joseph Ierardi, enter Superior Court Monday. RIGHT: Patricia Ierardi leaves Superior Court in Meriden.

was not produced in a timely way, when there would have been no incentive for Mr. Palmeri to withhold it."

"There is not a whisper in the warrant of Mr. Palmeri self-dealing or taking improper payments ... there's not a hint of financial impropriety," said Bloss.

Bloss added that some of the documents led to the arrests of the Ierardis.

Hugh F. Keeffe, the attorney for Joseph J. Ierardi, has indicated that the Ierardis will plead innocent. Neither Patricia Ierardi nor her lawyer, Tara Knight, had any comment Monday.

Keeffe said the case was continued because the state has "substantial discovery materials and investigation reports and statements that we have the right to get and analyze."

Supervisory Assistant State's Attorney Christopher Alexy will be prosecuting the case.

"We're continuing until May 17 because the state is obliged to provide discovery materials to the defendants that includes reports, videotapes," Alexy said after the court appearance.

"There are a large amount of them, and it takes time to duplicate them for the defense," Alexy said he doesn't anticipate more arrests in the case.

First Selectman Kevin J. Kopetz has placed the Ierardis and Palmeri on paid administrative leave for 45 days. The Ierardis have requested retirement and the town is studying their requests. Palmeri has not requested retirement.

Arnold Golob/Registler photos