

Ex-Police Chief Charged With Stealing Over \$200,000 Waives Jury

The former North Chicago police chief accused of embezzling from his department's asset forfeiture fund for years faces trial in early 2019.

By [Jonah Meadows, Patch Staff](#) | Oct 29, 2018 6:51 pm ET | Updated Oct 29, 2018 6:53 pm ET



WAUKEGAN, IL — The former police chief of North Chicago accused of stealing more than \$200,000 from his department's asset forfeiture seizure fund elected Monday to waive his right to a trial by jury. He could stand trial before a Lake County judge as soon as January, according to court records.

Michael G. Newsome, 57, was arrested in October 2012 and charged with seven felonies related to theft from his department's drug seizure fund. The charges include official misconduct, theft of more than \$100,000 of government property and misapplication of funds for a series of withdrawn between May 2007 and March 2012.

Two counts were dismissed by Circuit Judge James Booras in 2015 after Newsome's defense attorney, Doug Zeit, argued some of the charges fell outside the statute of limitations. However, a unanimous three-judge appellate court panel ruled in 2017 that the statute of limitations excludes periods where the accused is a public official and [reinstated](#) the charges.

Newsome has been out on bond since his arrest after posting a \$2,500 cash portion of his bond. He faces three class X felonies, which carry prison sentences of six to 30 years, and four class 3 felonies punishable with up to 5 years in state prison. His defense attorney did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the case.

In the initial indictment, prosecutors provided spreadsheets showing all account activity in the North Chicago Police Department Asset Forfeiture Seizure Fund. According to the appellate court ruling, the spreadsheets showed Newsome making dozens of cash withdrawals from the fund and deposits into his personal account. It also showed when the department's drug unit had actually requested money. During the 5-year period in question, Newsome withdrew \$276,537 but only \$57,200 had been requested by officers at his department, according to prosecutors.

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Prior to the passage of a civil asset forfeiture reform bill that took effect in July, Illinois law enforcement agencies seized [more than \\$30 million](#) a year from property owners, even if they were never convicted of any crimes, if the government asserted the assets were somehow involved in illicit activity.

Those targeted for such seizures, which [studies](#) have shown are [overwhelmingly](#) those in lower-income communities, were forced to pay fees and faced the burden of proving their innocence if law enforcement took their property. Illinois State Police must begin to publish forfeiture data at the start of next year under the [new law](#).

According to prosecutors, the ex-chief took the money from his department's drug money account and used it for paying for [personal expenses](#), including a home remodel, tuition fees for his children and car payments, the Lake County News-Sun reported. After more than 20 years with the department and seven as chief, Newsome resigned following his indictment in 2012. A status date has been set for Jan. 7 with a potential trial date of Jan. 28.

Top photo: Michael G. Newsome (Lake County Sheriff's Office)