

## **Wild Acres man charged with voter fraud in board election**

**By Beth Brelje / Pocono Record Writer**

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DELAWARE TWP. - A Dingmans Ferry man is charged with tampering with ballots in a board election in a private Pike County community, according to state police in Blooming Grove.

Myron Cowher, 51, faces charges of forgery, tampering with records and identity theft for taking possession of 70 ballots that were designated by name and lot number and belonged to property owners of Wild Acres, police said.

Police said the investigation is continuing and more arrests are anticipated.

According to state police and court records:

Wild Acres Property Manager Robert Depaolis said that Cowher asked to speak with him outside of the Wild Acres administration office, so they walked out to Cowher's car in March or April.

Cowher asked Depaolis to put 200 ballots belonging to S.O.S. property owners in good standing, so Cowher could use the ballots to vote for the candidates he wanted to win in the June board election.

S.O.S. properties are too small to build on so the property owners often do not vote in elections, although they do receive a ballot, Depaolis explained to police.

On April 30, Cowher called Depaolis and asked if he had the S.O.S. ballots.

Depaolis said that he did.

Cowher said that he wanted to meet so he could take care of the ballots.

He also told Depaolis that Wild Acres board Chairman Dmitry Kuperschmidt was aware and in agreement with pulling the ballots and casting votes for their favored candidates, police records said.

On May 7, Depaolis told police that Cowher was supposed to go to the Wild Acres office on May 8 and get the ballots.

Police and District Attorney Ray Tonkin arranged for the conversation between Depaolis and Cowher to be recorded.

On the recording, Cowher is heard describing who he was voting for on the ballot and why; and gave instructions on what to do if a property owner contacted the office, because they had not received a ballot that he had instead filled out.

He also said he planned to use different colored ink pens so the ballots did not all look the same.

He completed some ballots at that time and told Depaolis that he would complete the rest at home and when traveling.

When he was arrested, Cowher had a black duffel bag.

Police explained why he was being arrested and asked what was in the bag.

He admitted the ballots were in the bag. A search of the bag uncovered nine completed ballots and 62 that were not completed.

It is important to maintain the integrity of elections in private communities, Tonkin said. And it is an important arrest in Pike County given all the community associations, and the power boards have over the governance of these nonprofit associations, Tonkin added.

Cowher's bail was set at \$40,000, which he was unable to post. He was committed to the Pike County Correctional Facility.

His preliminary hearing is scheduled for May 20.

