**Local News**

**Springfield man pleads guilty in underage prostitution case**

**Prasath Boudavong gets a plea deal to dismiss prostitution accusations in a case with underage girls**

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A Springfield businessman was sentenced Wednesday to 240 days in jail after pleading guilty to seven felony sex charges relating to his hiring of underage girls as prostitutes.

Prasath Boudavong, who owned Far Man restaurant for four years, pleaded guilty to three counts of third-degree rape and five counts of third-degree sodomy for sex acts with girls as young as 14 between November 2007 and April of this year.

Lane County Circuit Judge Jack Billings also placed the 56-year-old Boudavong on three years of court-supervised probation, ordered him to register as a sex offender, and banned him from contact with minors except those specified in writing by his probation officer. Boudavong also forfeited to the state a 2000 Toyota Tacoma pickup truck he reportedly used to transport the girls to a house where the sex acts took place because they were too young to drive.

A Lane County grand jury in April indicted Boudavong on those charges and on four counts each of promoting prostitution and compelling prostitution. The latter charge is a Measure 11 offense carrying a minimum prison term of five years and eight months.

However, as part of Boudavong’s plea deal, Lane County Deputy District Attorney JoAnn Miller agreed to dismiss all the prostitution charges. Boudavong had no criminal history, she told Billings, and her legal research suggested that the Legislature intended Oregon’s promoting and compelling prostitution offenses “to be directed at someone who’s the pimp, not the john.”

Beginning about two years ago, she said, Boudavong “repeatedly sought out children to have sexual activity with, and regularly used the same person” to arrange the activity. That person is still under investigation, she said.

Eugene police Sgt. Kevin McCarthy said an investigation by the department’s vice detectives showed that Boudavong was just “a prolific customer,” not a pimp.

Boudavong, a small man with thinning black hair, answered “yes, sir” or “yes, sir, I did” every time Billings asked him if he committed each of the seven felony charges. His attorney, Brian Barnes, told Billings that his client committed the offenses after becoming involved with other men who were “prostituting young girls.”

“They were prostitutes when Mr. Boudavong made their acquaintance,” he said of the girls, none of whom could legally consent to sex because they were under the age of 16. “It doesn’t mitigate the fact that he had sex with them, but he was not involved in any way with their original corruption ... though he could be said to have contributed to their further delinquency.”

Billings agreed with the latter point, and lamented the fact that the girls probably were victims of “grossly dysfunctional homes,” early exposure to substance, physical or sexual abuse that led them to “victimize themselves by taking advantage of the predations of older men.”

“I hope, somehow, they can break that cycle,” the judge said.

Oregon Corporation Commission records show that Keo Boudavong replaced Prasath Boudavong as president of the Gateway area Chinese restaurant this week. Prasath Boudavong is no longer an owner, according to Eugene attorney Jill Featherstonhaugh, authorized agent for the business.