

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Ex-city official gets 18 months

Mahon sentenced for role in scheme that led to bank collapse

By Jason Meisner
Chicago Tribune

A former high-ranking city official was sentenced to 18 months in prison Wednesday for helping to conceal a multi-year embezzlement scheme that led to the failure of Washington Federal Bank for Savings, a family-run institution that had been a mainstay in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood for more than a century.

William Mahon, 57, pleaded guilty last year to conspiring to falsify bank records to deceive federal regulators and help hide millions in collateral-free loans authorized by then-bank President John Gembara that prosecutors alleged had essentially turned Washington Federal into a piggy bank for insiders and friends.

As part of the scheme, Mahon concealed a \$130,000 payment he received directly from Gembara to use as a down payment on a loan to build a three-flat in Bridgeport, records show.

Mahon, who was the \$139,000-a-year deputy commissioner of the Streets and Sanitation Department when he was charged in 2021, also admitted in a plea agreement he underreported income on his tax returns for years that cost the IRS more than \$60,000.

In asking for probation, Mahon's attorney, Thomas Breen, said Mahon was a bit player in the bank scheme and didn't participate or benefit directly from the embezzlement itself.

Instead, Breen said, Mahon trusted Gembara, his longtime friend, who purposefully put Mahon on the bank's loan committee because he knew Mahon had no banking experience and would not recognize the financial malfeasance going on behind the scenes.

Gembara killed himself in December 2017 just as regulators were about to take over.

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CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL

City backs cease-fire

Mayor casts tiebreaker on symbolic resolution supporting end to fighting in Gaza

Supporters say legislation helps provide voice of solidarity 'in a world of silence'



Sara Alashqar, a pro-Palestinian protester, celebrates Wednesday at City Hall after the Chicago City Council approved a resolution supporting a cease-fire in Gaza. VINCENT ALBAN/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

By Jake Sheridan
Chicago Tribune

Mayor Brandon Johnson cast the tiebreaking vote as the Chicago City Council narrowly passed a resolution calling for a permanent cease-fire in Gaza Wednesday, bringing a monthslong battle over the symbolic declaration to an end.

Johnson unknotted a 23-23 deadlock to give the controversial, symbolic legislation a one-vote majority after he once again cleared the council chambers because of disruptions from a crowd filled mostly by pro-cease-fire spectators.

The vote makes Chicago the largest American city to call for a cease-fire between Hamas and Israel, and delivers a razor-thin progressive win for Johnson and his aldermanic allies, as well as the pro-Palestinian community

groups that have led large downtown protests since war in Gaza broke out.

But it also further highlighted the stress in a closely divided City Council where some critics say they should be dealing with Chicago's many problems rather than weighing in on international politics.

Speaking just before the tight vote after more than an hour of debate, resolution sponsor Ald. Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez, 33rd, said she tried to work with aldermen opposed to the cease-fire language to reach a compromise that would get more support.

As a progressive, Democratic city, Chicago should be at the forefront of calling for a cease-fire, she said.

"Why is it urgent that we pass

Turn to Gaza, Page 6



Ald. Debra Silverstein, 50th, speaks Wednesday after the council meeting. Silverstein, the council's lone Jewish member, opposed the resolution and wanted stronger language in support of Israel. "We all want peace in the Middle East," she said. "We all want an end to the bloodshed and an end to the war. But it is vital to understand what caused the conflict." BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

U. of I. police didn't share details about Shannon case

Star basketball player facing rape charges

By Jonathan Bullington
Chicago Tribune

University of Illinois athletic director Josh Whitman sat before a bevy of reporters on a Friday in December and walked through the timeline that led university officials to suspend Chicago native Terrence Shannon Jr. from the men's basketball team after he was charged with rape in Kansas.

Shortly after Lawrence police began their investigation in September and continuing throughout the fall, Whitman said the school's Division of Intercollegiate Athletics knew little about the allegations against Shannon. Any information relayed from Lawrence investigators to athletics officials via the University of Illinois Police Department was "verbal, unsubstantiated and vague," he would later say in a court filing, and "not sufficient to trigger" a student-athlete discipline policy.

University administration waited until Dec. 27 to hand down



Illinois basketball player Terrence Shannon Jr. continues to play while facing a rape charge in Kansas. CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Shannon's short-lived suspension, after Whitman said his office first saw the arrest warrant and police reports.

But those documents had been sent to University of Illinois police three months earlier,

the Chicago Tribune learned through a Freedom of Information Act request. Illinois officials said campus police did not share those records with the athletics

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Election-year politics cloud fate of tax bill

Despite bipartisan approval in House, package faces GOP resistance, thin margins in Senate

By Kayla Guo
The New York Times

WASHINGTON — The House gave broad bipartisan approval Wednesday to a \$78 billion bill to expand the child tax credit and restore a set of corporate tax breaks, a rare feat in an election year by a Congress that has labored to legislate.

But the measure still faces a fraught path to enactment amid political divides over who should benefit the most. The effort, which faces resistance from Senate Republicans and some members of the House in both parties, is a test of whether a divided Congress with painfully thin margins can buck the dysfunction of the Republican-led House, set aside electoral

politics and deliver legislation that would contain victories for both parties.

"The Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act is important bipartisan legislation to revive conservative pro-growth tax reform," Speaker Mike Johnson said in a statement Wednesday. "This bottom-up process is a good example of how Congress is supposed to make law."

The bill passed by a vote of 357-70.

The package would expand the child tax credit — though a version substantially scaled back from its pandemic-era level — and restore a set of business tax breaks related to research and

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Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 14

\$4.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere
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