



“For Immediate Release”

## ***Auburndale Police Department News Release***

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### **Auburndale Police Department Files Charges in Two Separate Incidents Involving Auburndale High School Students**

On Wednesday morning, February 14<sup>th</sup>, at approximately 8:35 a.m., an incident occurred at Auburndale High School where a student attending a junior/senior prom fashion show used iPhone’s “Airdrop” feature to send a message to several others in attendance that read, “School Shooting ETA 8:40.” The assembly had roughly 600 high school students in it at the time and several others received the message.

After one student received the message, she immediately became concerned for her safety and showed the message to a friend. That friend then took her phone to the principal, who summoned the Auburndale Police school resource officer. The message caused chaos inside the auditorium among students and staff members. Additional police officers were dispatched to the school and administrators were placed on alert. This message also touched off a storm of social media posts at the school among students, disrupting the entire student body, teachers, school administrators, and parents of students.

An investigation led to the identification of the person who sent the message. The student was identified as Seth M. Donahue, W/M, 17years-old, of 601 Main Street South, Auburndale. He provided a full confession today, saying he received the message first from an unknown person. He then selected “all available contacts in the area,” (the school auditorium), and then sent the message using “Airdrop.” The identifier associated with the message he sent was later identified to him.

Donahue was arrested today on charges of: 1) Making Written Threats to Kill or do Bodily Injury, a second degree felony, and, 2) Disrupting a School Function, a second degree misdemeanor.

In a second incident that occurred yesterday morning outside Stambaugh Middle School, which abuts the Auburndale High School property, a female student was charged with Disrupting a School Function, a second degree misdemeanor.

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In that incident, a female 16 year-old Auburndale High School student approached three male students outside Stambaugh Middle School in the area of the car rider drop-off/pick-up loop and told them they needed to leave because there was “going to be a shooting at Stambaugh and the high school today (Thursday, February 15, 2018).” The female high school student then left the campus and walked home.

The suspect’s actions sent the initial three middle school students into a panic, following the multiple-fatality shooting the prior day at the high school in Parkland, Florida, causing them to run around yelling “active shooter” outside. This then disrupted the student body, causing fear and panic, as well as causing concerned parents to gather at the front of the school to check on their kids and, in some cases, to want to check them out of school for their safety. This also caused administrators at the school to be drawn away from their normal assignments to deal with the concerned parents and students.

The Auburndale Police school resource officer met with the suspect and her mother and after having determined probable cause existed to charge her with creating a disruption at the school, he completed a complaint affidavit (charging document).

The Auburndale Police Department has three full-time school resource officers assigned to public schools in the city and enjoys a great partnership with the Polk County School Board and our local law enforcement partners. We have assigned additional officers to the schools in recent days following the tragedy in South Florida. Police Chief Chris Nelson said, “We are focused on and committed to the safety of our children. The time and effort we have put into responding to and investigating these two incidents has negatively impacted our increased campus patrols and caused fear among our local students and their parents. This is not acceptable.”

We want young people to understand there is never a time when doing something like this is acceptable. It causes chaos, creates panic, and ties up law enforcement officers who can be doing other things to keep people safe. This is a serious matter and actions of this sort will result in criminal charges for the offender. We encourage parents to talk to their kids about this important matter and to use this as a teachable moment.

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