News Writing Midterm

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Kittatinny Mayor Gustavus G. Petykiewicz involved in a car accident Saturday afternoon while drunk behind the wheel. No one was killed in the two car accident on the intersection of State Highway 117 and Fonebone Road in nearby Frontenac. Mayor Petykiewicz, age 57, failed a field sobriety test and also consented to an alcohol breath test at the scene which hinted at a blood alcohol level of .14, almost two times the state’s legal limit. The accident occurred when Petykiewicz’s car gingerly made its way into the intersection and hit the oncoming car in the driver’s side.

The other driver involved in the accident was identified as Robert H. Doane of Kittatinny. Doane was taken to the hospital and trauma center in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania under the concern that he may have suffered spinal damage. Doane, age 43, was in pain, but conscience at the scene. Later conversation with the hospital confirmed Doane did not suffer spinal injury, but he did suffer several broken ribs, a broken jaws, and varying degrees of cuts and bruises. Doane is now in stable condition and should make a full recovery.

Mayor Petykiewicz was arrested at the scene, telling the officer that “you’d be drinking, too, if you were me” and further commented “Do you think we could just keep this quiet? I’m the mayor of Kittatinny.” Mayor Petykiewicz was released from the Schuylkill County Jail after his wife, Gloria Petykiewicz posted a cash bail of $500. A preliminary hearing will held Tuesday at 9 a.m. Mayor Petykiewicz will face a charge of causing injury due to operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated. Schuylkill County District Attorney, Robert J. Morgenthau says the mayor could end up serving a maximum of 10 years in prison. The mayor and his wife have no further comments on the accident at this time and have declined an interview.

Denelda Penoyer, the president of the Kittatinny City Council, spoke out on the decisions that could be made regarding the mayor. Penoyer said that “the council will hold an emergency meeting at 7 p.m. Monday”, which the day before the mayor’s hearing. This meeting will be closed to the public given the sensitive and important nature of the discussion. According to state law any official convicted of a felony is ineligible to hold elective office in Pennsylvania, so if Petykiewicz is found guilty, he will automatically lose his job. When asked whether or not she thinks the mayor should resign given this recent event Penoyer said “I think it would be premature for me to discuss this.” Penoyer made it clear that should the mayor leave office the council can hold a special election for mayor to be held on the first Tuesday at least 30 days after the council’s decision.

There was a witness to the crash, Alice Q. Magarian, who driving northbound on State Highway 117 behind Doane’s vehicle. Magarian, age 34, said that she was “several car length behind, just enough to stop safely and pull over”. Magarian confirmed the police report which said Doane was going 55 mph (the speed limit), while the mayor’s car hesitantly moved forward into the intersection.

The noted other key factors that contributed to the severity of the accident. First, Doane’s 1997 Buick La Sabre didn’t have a working airbag, although Doane was where a seat beat which helped prevent further injury. Mayor Pietykiewicz, who driving a 2006 Ford Explorer, was not wearing a seatbelt, however, the combination of alcohol and lesser speed than Doane’s vehicle might explain the mayor’s lack of injuries.