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Hampshire County Woman Charged After Using Bees to Attack Sheriff's Deputies During Longmeadow Eviction

LONGMEADOW—A Hadley woman is facing serious charges after using bee hives to attack Hampden County Sheriff's deputies as they, in accordance with state law, enforced an eviction this past week in Longmeadow.

On Wednesday, Oct. 12, around 9:15 a.m., Rorie Susan Woods, 55, of 29 Golden Court, Hadley, pulled up to the scene of an ongoing eviction at 49 Memery Lane in a blue Nissan Xterra. She left a dog in the car and immediately went to manufactured bee hives being towed by her SUV, and began trying to open the lids to unleash them.

A Sheriff's deputy tried to stop her, but as the agitated bees started getting out and circling the area, he pulled back. She then smashed the lid, and flipped a hive off of the flatbed, making the bees extremely aggressive. They swarmed the area and stung several officers and other innocent bystanders who were nearby.

She then put on a professional beekeeper suit to protect herself as she carried a tower of bees near the front door of the home in an attempt to stop the eviction, which has been stop-and-go for the better part of two years.

"We are always prepared for protests when it comes to evictions, but a majority of the groups who protest understand that we are just doing our statutory duty in accordance with state law," said Sheriff Nick Cocchi. "And they appreciate how we go above and beyond to help the people being evicted with anything they need from food and temporary shelter, to long-term housing, employment, and mental health and substance use disorder treatment. But this woman, who traveled here, put lives in danger as several of the staff on scene are allergic to bees. We had one staff member go the hospital and luckily, he was alright or she would be facing manslaughter charges. I support people's right to protest peacefully but when you cross the line and put my staff and the public in danger, I promise you will be arrested."

After she carried a bee hive close to the front door of the home, she tried to agitate the bees further, and she was arrested by Sheriff's deputies and booked at the Western Mass. Regional Women's Correctional Facility. Ms. Woods is facing four counts of assault and battery by means of a dangerous weapon; three counts of assault by means of a dangerous weapon, and a disorderly conduct charge.

"Never in all my years of leading the Hampden County Sheriff's Civil Process Division have I seen something like this," said Robert Hoffman, Chief Deputy of the Civil Process Office. "We truly try to help everyone we are court-ordered to evict and the New York Times even documented the Sheriff's humane eviction process during the pandemic. I'm just thankful no one died because bee allergies are serious. I hope that these out-of-county protesters will reconsider using such extreme measures in the future because they will be charged and prosecuted."

Before the pandemic, the Hampden County Sheriff's Civil Process Division was serving between 600-800 eviction notices annually. Only some of those become actual removals, but the number gives perspective. And while the Sheriff's Office is required by law to enforce evictions, we conduct them with compassion and empathy because that is what Sheriff Nick Cocchi directs the team to do.

When the Sheriff's Office gets a first notice relative to an eviction (called a Notice to Quit), well ahead of any actual removal, we reach out to the person and ask how we can help. Our staff offers assistance with everything that can lead

someone to an eviction, including job placement, health and mental health issues, as well as substance use disorder, to name a few.

And following an eviction, we never leave anyone to be homeless or sleep in a car. Through our All-Inclusive Support Services center in Springfield, we use our relationships with local property owners, housing authorities and landlords to get people into safe and stable housing, and we ensure they have the employment opportunities to be able to pay rent to maintain it.

During the pandemic, we gained national attention for what the [New York Times billed as a 'humane' way to conduct evictions](#). And as a result, around \$20,000 was donated to us, which we placed in one of our non-profit arms to assist families facing eviction who are in need. We've used the donation to help with temporary housing, as well as longer-term housing, as we aim to help those we encounter who need the hand up.

For this story, you can find photos, including Ms. Woods' mugshot, in a Dropbox folder [here](#). All photos can be attributed to the Hampden County Sheriff's Office.

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