

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, UNION COUNTY, OHIO
CRIMINAL DIVISION**

STATE OF OHIO,

Case No. 2020-CR-0099

Plaintiff,

vs.

STEFFEN EVAN BALDWIN,

JUDGE DANIEL T. HOGAN

Defendant

DECISION

Defendant, Steffan Baldwin (Baldwin), was appointed Union County Humane Agent on November 15, 2012. Baldwin started the formation of Animal Cruelty Task Force Ohio (ACT) in May of 2013. By January, 1, 2014 ACT was established as a 501(C)(3) nonprofit corporation through the State of Ohio. Articles of incorporation for ACT, filed with the Ohio Secretary of State's Office, were prepared and signed by Baldwin. The articles include the following.

"The primary and specific purposes for which said Corporation is formed are:

- (a) To operate exclusively for charitable, religious, education, and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code. The Corporation is dedicated exclusively to charitable purposes and not for gain or individual profit. The following more specific purposes are within the scope of such exempt purposes.
- (b) To work directly with rural Humane Societies formed under Ohio Revised Code Section 1717.05, assisting them with appointing and equipping competent Humane

Agents based on the requirements outlined in the Ohio Revised Code Section 1717.06, to ensure the proper and professional enforcement of animal cruelty laws defined under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 959, Offenses Relating to Domestic Animals, based on the legal authority to enforce animal cruelty laws given to Humane Agents in their jurisdiction: defined under Ohio Revised Code Section 1717.08”

An Entry filed January 10, 2014 by the Union County Probate Court appointed Baldwin as a Humane Agent representing ACT. Baldwin displayed a badge and had the legal authority of a Humane Agent.

ACT was operated out of three locations, all in Union County Ohio. From January, 2014 to January, 2015, a house at 323 S. Main St. Marysville, Ohio was used. (A satellite facility was operated at 124 S. Main St. during this period.) From January 2015 to August 2015 a residence at St. Rt. 31 was used. Finally, from August 2015 to February 8, 2018, a farm house at 20365 St. Rt. 739, Richwood, Ohio 43344 was used.

Testimony at trial from a number of witnesses clearly showed that Baldwin, from his appointment in 2012 up until early 2015, did good work. He was a conscientious Humane Agent dealing with the usual cases one would find in a rural community. It is unclear exactly when things started to change but by early 2015 there was a change.

Baldwin’s focus shifted from the problems of a Humane Agent in a rural setting to a concentration on rescuing and rehabilitating aggressive dogs. The defendant recognized he could be successful in the dog rescue world if he specialized in rescuing and rehabilitating dogs, especially bully breed dogs. By July of 2016 Baldwin had formed his personal business “Save Them Dogs Training”.

Baldwin realized the power of social media. Using e-mails, text messages, Instagram, Facebook and Facebook Messenger and other forms of telecommunication he generated interest, followers and donations from a sizeable national and even international rescue community. Baldwin’s scheme was to promote himself as a gifted rehabilitator of aggressive

dogs and rescue the dogs from shelter euthanasia lists or from cruelty or neglect situations. Then, post on social media about the successful rescue of the dog. The media posts generated notoriety and trust from dog shelters, dog lovers and the public in general. ACT received donations from individuals who wanted to help the dogs. In time the public interest in a rescued dog would die down and only individuals interested in a particular dog would inquire of Baldwin about outcomes. Baldwin would attempt to have the dogs adopted or placed with fosters; however, a number of these placements did not work out and the animals would be returned to ACT. Baldwin had limited space for dogs. While under Baldwin's care and custody during a three-year period from January 1, 2014 to December 31, 2016, at least 18 dogs were either euthanized or died. Through various forms of electronic communications, all of which fit within the RC 2913.01(x) definition of "Telecommunication", Baldwin concealed the dogs' deaths from individuals who inquired about them. He lied about the dogs' status months and even years after they died. He did this to protect his reputation. He was able to successfully continue "rescuing dogs", soliciting and receiving donations.

During this period of time, from January 1, 2014 to February 8, 2017, Baldwin used the ACT financial account as his own. The money was used for his personal expenses. There was virtually no corporate structure. Virtually no board meetings, minutes, or record keeping. A forensic accounting analysis indicated that Baldwin controlled the funds for his personal use. What portion was used for the care and maintenance of the dogs is not in evidence before this Court.

This case was jury waived. It started on January 8, 2024 and lasted for thirteen days. Fifty-eight witnesses testified. The trial was reconvened on November 27, 2024 for further examination of Officer James Conroy. Three hundred and three exhibits were admitted.

The State of Ohio presented compelling evidence, proof of the sad events that make up the remainder of this decision.

BRIBERY 2921.02 (B) & (E) F-3

COUNT 1

The investigation of this case began in April of 2017. Litsa Kargakos (Litsa) contacted Officer Jim Conroy (Conroy) of the Campbell, Ohio Police Department. She reported the history of Remington (Remi) and her dealings with Baldwin. This began Conroy's near six year investigation of Baldwin and ACT Ohio. Litsa testified that she became aware of Remi in late May of 2016. Remi had been at the Trumbell County Dog Pound for nearly 3 ½ months. There had been two incidents where Remi allegedly bit volunteers. Remi was designated a dangerous dog. Remi's problem was resource guarding.

Litsa hired a lawyer, Dana Penella, and with her legal help negotiated Remi's conditional release from the Pound. Litsa took Remi to her home that she shared with her husband, Angelo Kargakos (Angelo). They operated a dog rescue "No Fear Rescue" from their home just outside of Youngstown, Ohio. Litsa hired a professional dog trainer, Jennifer Falvy, to help with Remi's resource guarding issues. Falvy worked with Remi for about 3 1/3 months and Remi made substantial progress.

Litsa and Angelo's goal was to get a forever home for Remi. The dangerous dog designation made that problematic, if not impossible. Litsa testified that she was aware of Baldwin through the dog rescue community. She met him in 2016 and was extremely impressed with him. The Kargakos's were so moved by Baldwin's apparent dedication to the dog rescue effort that they adjusted their estate planning to leave him over one million dollars for the rescue and care of at-risk dogs. They were aware of Baldwin's standing in the rescue community. They followed him on social media and noted that he had tens of thousands of social media followers.

After text communications Baldwin came to the Kargako's home at the end of May, 2016. He met Remi and worked with other dogs at the residence. He wore his Humane Agent

badge on his belt. Baldwin told Litsa and Angelo that for the \$1,000 he could get the dangerous dog designation removed in his home county, Union County.

By September of 2016 Remi was displaying no signs of resource guarding. Litsa decided to place Remi with Baldwin so he could work towards removal of the dangerous dog designation. An agreement was reached wherein Baldwin agreed to 1) train the dog 2) get the dangerous dog designation Removed 3) Remi would stay in Baldwin's home 4) if Remi regressed and started displaying resource guarding that Remi would be returned to Litsa.

Angelo took Remi and met Baldwin in Canton, Ohio on September 9, 2016. Remi went to the Richwood ACT farm house in Union County with Baldwin. Text messages were exchanged between Baldwin and Litsa through September. Photos of Remi were sent by Baldwin to Litsa for a period of time in September. After that the photo's stopped. Litsa and Angelo never saw Remi again.

As will be discussed in greater detail later in this decision Remi was euthanized, at Baldwin's request, on December 28, 2016. The dangerous dog designation was never removed. No evidence was presented at trial that Baldwin did any resource guarding training with Remi. No evidence was presented that Baldwin did anything concerning the dangerous dog designation. Evidence was presented indicating that the only way to removed such designation would require a Court Order. It is beyond belief that Baldwin, with his years of experience, did not know that court action was necessary.

Baldwin was the appointed Humane Agent for Union County Humane Society and ACT Ohio. While wearing his badge he told Litsa and Angelo that, he could, for \$1000, remove Remi's dangerous dog designation because of his connections in Union County. In three separate payments, Baldwin was paid \$1000 for that service.

Telecommunications Fraud 2913.05 (A) (B) (C)

Count 2 Remi F-4

As stated above Remi was euthanized, at Baldwin's request on December 28, 2016. Between January 10 and January 14, 2017, more than two weeks after Remi was put down, Baldwin, posted adoption biographies for Remi twice on "Rescue Me Ohio" Facebook page and then changed Remi's public status from "Up For Adoption" to "Adopted" on Petfinder". Baldwin's purposed in posting this false information was two-fold: to deceive Litsa and Angelo Kargakos and to protect his image as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 9 REMI F-5

Between April 2, 2017 and April 12, 2017 Baldwin used phone calls, text messages and/or Facebook messages intending to mislead Litsa and Angelo into believing that Remi was still alive. Litsa had taken a number of steps, contacting a number of people, some of them in Union County, attempting to get answers about Remi. Baldwin used the telecommunication to deceive the Litsa and Angelo and to protect his image as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 40 F-3

The facts proven, that support the guilty findings of Telecommunications Fraud in this decision, along with other evidence presented, clearly show Baldwin's scheme. With minor variations, Baldwin would rescue dogs, use social media to publicize the rescue, promote his efforts and solicit donations for ACT Ohio. He used the ACT Ohio financial accounts as his personal property. He then used social media and other telecommunications services to deceive the public concerning the fate of the dogs, furthering his scheme to defraud. Baldwin's private business, "Save Them Dogs" also benefited from the scheme.

Clearly the value of the benefit obtained by Baldwin or the detriment to the victims of the fraud is \$7500 or more. Angelo and Robert Dunigan alone testified that they paid Baldwin \$7,000 for his work with their dogs Bella and Lilly. They relied on the Defendant's reputation .

and reputed success rate. The ACT Ohio PayPal account records show additional donations through the entire period of time from 2014 to 2017.

Baldwin lied to the public to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator in order to keep the money flowing.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS FRAUD 2913.05 (A) AND (C) F-5

COUNT 10 ZACK

Zack was a Pitbull-Terrier Baldwin rescued from the Franklin County Dog Shelter in the summer of 2015. Baldwin attempted to get Zack adopted but without success. Zack was problematic with other dogs at the ACT property, being involved in two separate attacks on dogs. Circa December 28, 2016 Zack was Killed on Baldwin's property allegedly by another dog. On March 30, 2017, Connie McKee from the Franklin County dog shelter contacted Baldwin asking about Zack. By text or Facebook Messenger, three months after Zack's death Baldwin told McKee that Zack was living with a volunteer. By April 16, 2017 Baldwin had changed Zack's status on Petfinder to "Adopted". Evidence showed that Baldwin could have removed Zack's Petfinder profile without comment. Baldwin deceived McKee and the rescue community about Zack in order to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 11 GUCCI

In April 2016, Gucci, a year and a half old American Staffordshire Terrier mix with various aggressive behaviors was owned by and living at Blue Chip Rescue in Dallas, Pennsylvania. Baldwin solicited Marge Bart, the Blue Chip owner, telling her that he would take Gucci, rehabilitate him and get him adopted into a forever home for \$1,000. Bart paid Baldwin \$500 and told him to return the dog if things did not work out. While in Baldwin's custody

Gucci bit two people. Gucci was placed by Baldwin in a foster home and Gucci attacked a dog there. On October 10, 2016, Baldwin had Gucci euthanized. Baldwin used emails or text and Facebook messages to lie to various individuals at Blue Chip Farm for eight months after the dog was put down. They were told Gucci was alive and had found a forever home. Baldwin lied to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 16 ANDOR

Andor was at the Medina County SPCA having been seized in an animal cruelty case. Andor started showing signs of aggression so SPCA staff contacted Baldwin. Baldwin took Andor on September 20, 2014. In 2015 Andor was struck by a vehicle on the road near the ACT Richwood location. The exact date of Andor's death is unclear. While there was telephone, text, email or Facebook Messenger communication between Baldwin and shelter staff concerning Andor the dates of that communication in relation to Andor's death are unclear. There is insufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt this allegation.

COUNT 17 SAMMY

Sammy was a 7 year old American Bull/Pitbull mix who had been placed in the Franklin County Animal Shelter in December 2015. Constance Swackhammer had a two-year relationship with Sammy. She provided food and supplies for Sammy, both before and during his stay at the shelter. Baldwin took Sammy from FCAS in January 2016. Circa June 9, 2016 Sammy was euthanized, at Baldwin's request, at the Union County Humane Society. On June 13, 2016 Constance inquired of Baldwin about Sammy. Four days after putting Sammy down, Baldwin told her through telecommunication, that Sammy was still at ACT. Baldwin lied to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 19 SABER

Saber was a five-year old female Pitbull. Baldwin rescued her from Central Ohio Pit Savers in Columbus, Ohio on February 18, 2016. On or around February 25, 2016 a dog fight occurred. Baldwin and Sammy (see count 17) were treated for injuries allegedly sustained in said fight. Baldwin told a number of people that Saber was the other dog involved. Saber seems to have disappeared after this dog fight. The only evidence about Saber comes from telecommunications by Baldwin. The State asks this Court to find Baldwin guilty based on the Defendant's pattern of conduct with the other twelve dogs. There is insufficient evidence to prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, this allegation.

COUNT 21 SHADOW

Shadow was a ten-year old Shepard mix. One December 15, 2014 Baldwin rescued Shadow from a cruelty situation. On July 1, 2015, Baldwin stated Shadow bit a kid in the face. In a separate Facebook message, between Baldwin and his friend Nancy Weaver, Baldwin told her that Shadow got out, bit a kid and was put down. In September 2015 Baldwin acknowledged that Shadow was dead. On October 4, 2015, more than three months after Shadow was put down Baldwin changed Shadow's Petfinder profile to Adopted. Evidence showed that Baldwin could have removed Shadow's Petfinder profile without comment. Baldwin lied to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 22 TITAN

Titan was a five-year old Pitbull mix owned by Josh and Olivia Williams. Olivia gave birth to a child. The dog had behavior issues that concerned Olivia. After an extended waiting period, because ACT Ohio had no space, Baldwin accepted Titan on February 7, 2016 at the ACT Ohio property in Richwood. No paper work was signed. Ownership of Titan was not transferred. Olivia testified that she wanted Baldwin to work with Titan and then re-home him. On March 25, 2016 Baldwin took Titan to Rascal Animal Hospital (RAH) and had him euthanized.

Baldwin told RAH that Titan bit a child in the face. There was no evidence found that Titan bit a child. Between April 11, 2016 and August 23, 2017 there were many Facebook and email messages between Baldwin and Olivia. In all of these communications Baldwin lied to her, leaving Olivia to believe that Titan was alive and well. It was not until Officer Conroy contacted her during his investigation that Olivia and Josh found out that Titan had been euthanized. Baldwin lied to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 26 BERETTA

Beretta was a two-year old female Mastiff mix. Baldwin rescued Beretta from the Muskingum County Dog Pound on August 16, 2015. Baldwin took Beretta to Rascal animal Hospital on November 23, 2015 and had her euthanized. On December 10, 2015, Baldwin changed Beretta's Petfinder profile from "up for adoption" to "adopted". Evidence shows that the profile could have been removed without comment. Baldwin lied to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 28 MISTY

Misty was a five-year old American Staffordshire terrier. Baldwin rescued Misty from the Jefferson County Humane Society and brought her to ACT Ohio in October of 2014. Misty was involved in a dog fight at ACT. On August 21, 2015 over Facebook Messenger Baldwin said he put Misty down today. On October 4, 2015 Baldwin changed Misty's Petfinder profile from "up for adoption" to "adopted". Evidence showed that Baldwin could have removed the profile without comment. Furthermore on December 21, 2015, through Facebook Messenger, Baldwin told Brian Young, who was affiliated with the Jefferson County Humane Society, that Misty was good and had been adopted. Baldwin lied to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 31 ROXIE

Roxie was a female Pitbull Terrier who came from TOP of Ohio Pet Shelter (TOP) in Bellefontaine, Ohio on March 17, 2015. TOP was a 501(C)(3) charitable organization. Roxie was involved in two dog fights with Misty. After the second fight Baldwin admitted that he put Misty down. After the fight Baldwin never posted about either dog. In all probability Roxie died as a result of the fight but there is insufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt the allegation in Count 31.

COUNT 37 LULU

Lulu was a female Bull Terrier mix rescued from the Mahoning County Dog Pound by Baldwin and ACT Ohio on or near July 8, 2014. On July 8, 2015, Baldwin, through Facebook Messenger, stated that he found Lulu dead in her crate. On October 4, 2015 Baldwin changed Lulu's Petfinder profile from "up for adoption" to "adopted". Evidence showed that the profile could have been removed without comment. Baldwin lied to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 38 ZYLAH

Zylah was an eight-month-old "pocket pit" when she came to ACT Ohio. Through Facebook Messenger on August 8, 2015 Baldwin said Zylah was found dead. On October 4, 2015 Baldwin changed Zylah's Petfinder profile from "up for adoption" to "adopted". Evidence showed that the profile could have been removed without comment. Baldwin lied to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator

TAMPERING WITH RECORDS 2913.42 (A)(1) & (B)(4) F-3

COUNT 3 REMI

Litsa Kargakos had been seeking information about Remi from September 2016 through April 2017. Remi was euthanized on December 28, 2016. Baldwin was deceiving Litsa hoping she would believe Remi was alive, well, and had been adopted. Litsa contacted the Union County Dog Warden Mary Beth Brown and she inquired about dog license renewal information on Remi. Baldwin became aware of Litsa's efforts. As a result he went to the Union County Dog Warden on April 4, 2017 and renewed Remi's dog license. In doing so he gave false information that Remi was alive when in fact Baldwin had him euthanized on December 28, 2016.

COUNT 5

The background facts are cited in Count 3. Baldwin gave false information in the application for a Dangerous Dog License for Remi, stating that Remi was still alive.

TAMPERING WITH RECORDS 2913.42 (A)(2) & (B)(4) F-3

COUNT 4

The background facts are the same as those cited above in Count 3. Baldwin uttered a writing or record that being an application for the dog license for Remi. In doing so he gave false information that Remi was still alive.

COUNT 6

The background facts are found above in Count 3. Baldwin uttered a writing or record that being the application for the Dangerous Dog License for Remi. In doing so he gave false information that Remi was still alive.

TAMPERING WITH RECORDS

COUNTS 24 & 25

On August 21, 2015 Baldwin filed a bite report with the Union County Health department stating that Beretta had bitten him. Evidence showed that Baldwin told a number of different people a number of different stories about the bites and the dog that did it. There is insufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt the allegations in Counts 24 & 25.

CRUELTY TO COMPANION ANIMALS

959.131 (E)(1) & 959.99 (E)(4) F-5

“needlessly killed”

COUNT 8 REMI

Litsa and Angelo Kargakos, their care and concern for Remi, and their relationship with Baldwin have been detailed above in counts 1 and 2. The agreement transferring Remi from the Kargakos family to Baldwin made clear that Litsa and Angelo would take Remi back if things did not work out with Baldwin.

Baldwin claimed that on December 28, 2016 Remi broke out of a cage and engaged in a fight with Zack, that Remi was “severely injured”, and that Zack was killed. On the same date Baldwin took Remi to RAH. Dr. Gonzalez examined Remi and noted no visible wounds except for minor scrapes on his nose. Only a minor amount of dried blood. Jennifer Falvey was accepted as an expert witness in the areas of dog training, and behavior. She worked with Remi for a period of time before he went to ACT. Resource guarding was the only issue Remi displayed. Ms. Falvey noted that Baldwin indicated in a text message in December of 2016 that Remi was “great with other dogs”. There is no evidence in this record that Remi was dog aggressive. Ms. Falvey testified that if Remi attacked and killed Zack there would have been considerable blood on Remi.

In addition to Baldwin’s account stated above he told different versions of what happened to various people and on social media.

Because one must rely on Baldwin's word we will never know precisely what happened. But it is clear, Remi was not put down because he was "severely injured", there is no evidence that he was dog aggressive and he had a home with the Kargakos family if Baldwin had honored his agreement. Remi was needlessly killed so Baldwin could protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 12 GUCCI

On April 25, 2016 Baldwin received Gucci from Blue Chip Farm Animal Refuge in Pennsylvania. Blue Chip was a "no kill" refuge. They did not euthanize dogs for behavioral issues. The evidence was clear that Gucci could have returned to Blue Chip at any time.

Baldwin was made aware of Gucci's behavioral issues. Despite these issues, within seven days of arriving at ACT, Baldwin posted on Facebook that the dog was done with rehab and up for adoption. After two predictably unsuccessful placements Baldwin messaged through Facebook Messenger that Gucci was back at ACT and probably staying with him. One day later on October 10, 2016 Baldwin took Gucci to the Union County Humane Society and Dr. Amy Welker euthanized Gucci. The reason Baldwin gave was aggression. Aggression was one of the behavioral issues Baldwin was made aware of just six months earlier when he "rescued" Gucci from the "no kill" shelter. Gucci had a home to go back to. Baldwin had Gucci needlessly killed to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 43 SAMMY

Baldwin rescued Sammy from the Franklin County dog Shelter on January 8, 2016. Sammy was scheduled to be euthanized for behavioral reasons. While at ACT on February 25, 2016 Sammy had a fight with Saber. Saber died and Sammy was treated at RAH for multiple bite wounds and lacerations that required stitches. On June 9, 2016 Baldwin took Sammy to the Union County Humane Society. Dr. Amy Welker euthanized Sammy at Baldwin's request for

dog aggression. There is insufficient evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt this allegation.

COUNT 44 WINSTON

Winston was a three year old American Bulldog. Baldwin rescued Winston from the Mahoning County Dog pound on September 30, 2014. In mid to later October 2014 Winston was placed in a foster home. The dog developed behavioral issues while in placement. Baldwin attempted to work with Winston but the dog would not allow Baldwin to get close. Winston was euthanized at RAH by Dr. Gonzalez on December 4, 2014. There is insufficient evidence to prove this allegation beyond a reasonable doubt.

COUNT 45 TITAN

Titan was owned by Olivia and Josh Williams. Titan was a fearful dog with sensitivity to being touched on or around his head and face. Olivia was due to have a baby and was concerned about Titan around the child.

The dog was delivered to Baldwin at the ACT property on February 7, 2016. Olivia did not sign any paper work transferring ownership of Titan to Baldwin or ACT Ohio. Her expectation was that Baldwin would work with Titan and then find a home for him. Titan continued to display behavioral issues. Apparently, Titan was placed in a foster home but was then returned to Baldwin. On March 25, 2016 Baldwin took Titan to RAH to be euthanized, Baldwin's stated reason being that Titan bit a child in the face. Titan was with Baldwin for 44 days. Baldwin did not own the dog. There is no evidence that he worked with the dog. There is no evidence, other than Baldwin's statement, that Titan ever bit a child.

Baldwin had Titan, a dog owned by the Williams family, needlessly killed so he could protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 46 BERETTA

Beretta was at the Muskingum County Dog Pound for nearly eleven months. Volunteers Jane Cooper and Jennifer Durant walked Beretta and spent time with her during her stay at the pound. Both testified that Beretta was an affectionate, fun loving, friendly dog. There were zero behavioral issues. Tiffany Habib, a dog lover who had developed an affection for Beretta, contacted Baldwin about Beretta.

Baldwin rescued Beretta on August 16, 2015. Five days later on August 21, 2015 Beretta was involved in a fight with Belle. Two months later on November 23, 2015 Baldwin had Beretta euthanized at RAH. The veterinary records do not list any reason why Beretta was put down. Baldwin told a number of different stories to a number of different people about why Beretta was put down. Some of the various "facts" given by Baldwin to justify the euthanasia are demonstrably false.

Beretta's death opened a spot at ACT Ohio for Booker. Christina Tortorella sponsored Booker and testified that she initially paid \$2,500.00 to ACT for Booker's boarding and food. More was paid as time went on. Other than Baldwin's uncorroborated statements there is no evidence that Beretta was aggressive. Beretta was needlessly killed so Baldwin could continue his scheme and protect his reputation.

COUNT 50 ROMEO

Romeo was a five-year old American Pitbull who was owned by Alex Armaly. Some five months after he arrived Romeo started having issues with Hank, Alex's other dog. Romeo had a tumor on his leg and needed veterinary attention. Due to the behavior issues and the impending Vet bills Alex started posting on a social media site about trying to re-home Romeo.

Baldwin's girlfriend, Jennifer Kassouf, told Baldwin about Alex and Romeo. Baldwin told Alex he could get Vet care at no cost to her and work on the dog's aggression issues. Alex

decided to let Baldwin take Romeo on August 6, 2014. She signed no paper work transferring ownership.

Baldwin took Romeo to Dr. Amy Welker at the Union County Humane Society one August 7, 2014. The dog was neutered and a mast cell tumor was removed from the rear leg. A sample of the tumor was sent for lab analysis. The tumor samples were tested and found to be subcutaneous mast cell low grade tumors. An expert witness for the state, Dr. Cheryl Bates, in her expert report wrote "...the abnormal cells were extremely unlikely to spread or be problematic if the mass was completely removed....even if incompletely removed, his chance of survival was very high and chance of future spread was very low."

On August 28, 2014, twenty-one days post-surgery, Baldwin took Romeo to Rascal Animal Hospital and had him euthanized. No reason was given by Baldwin in the medical records for Romeo being put down.

Alex Armaly was told by Baldwin, through Jennifer Kassouf, that Romeo was put down because the cancer had spread through his entire body.

There is no evidence that Romeo was seen for veterinary care after the August 7, 2014 removal of the tumor.

Romeo was needlessly killed, put down by Baldwin to protect his reputation as a rescuer and rehabilitator.

COUNT 52 CHEYENNE

Cheyenne was an eight-year-old female Rottweiler mix. Baldwin rescued Cheyenne on May 26, 2016 out of a neglect situation. Defendant posted on Facebook about the rescue and in response ACT Ohio received \$400 in donations.

Cheyenne was placed in the foster home of Lesley Seaman in Chillicothe, OH. Shortly after placement Cheyenne displayed symptoms of diabetes. Lesley was authorized by ACT to

take the dog to a vet. Dr. Thorp saw Cheyenne, performed medical tests and diagnosed diabetes in July of 2016. After a second vet visit the vet recommended daily insulin. Lesley notified ACT of the situation and she returned the dog to an ACT representative in Columbus. Patricia Rogers responded to a post from ACT Ohio Facebook looking for a medical foster for Cheyenne in July 2016. She agreed to foster. Two weeks went by while she waited for the dog. She thought the delay was due to waiting on a mail order insulin shipment. Having a veterinary tech degree and a medical background she alerted ACT Ohio so they understood the urgency of the situation. Cheyenne was dropped off at Rogers' home on July 19, 2016 without medical supplies, paperwork or medical records. The dog was suffering and the symptoms were significant. Rogers suspected diabetic ketoacidosis. After trying, unsuccessfully, to contact ACT Rogers took Cheyenne to RAH. At RAH the dog was again diagnosed with diabetes and needed daily insulin injections. Rogers paid RAH for the initial bloodwork because of the emergency situation. The dog was owned by ACT Ohio. Rogers had no financial responsibility for Cheyenne's treatment. Rogers left Cheyenne at Rascal Animal Hospital in order to go to work. According to RAH notes Baldwin told Rascal Animal Hospital that Rogers would be financially responsible for Cheyenne's care. Cheyenne had been dropped on Rogers' doorstep five hours earlier.

Dr. Gonzalez testified that Cheyenne was in ketoacidosis. She received insulin treatment and responded extremely well. Less than twenty-four hours later her blood glucose level was normal. Baldwin was in touch with RAH and was aware of the encouraging news. Baldwin sent a text to the RAH office manager telling them he doesn't have a lot of money to put into the dog and told folks at RAH to do what they think is best. Dr. Gonzalez testified the vet at RAH chose to euthanize Cheyenne due to unknown financial situation and unknown prognosis.

Expert witness, Dr. Cheryl Bater, reviewed Cheyenne's history and vet care. She concluded that Cheyenne was put down while making an excellent recovery and a vigorous positive response to the insulin.

Baldwin rescued Cheyenne, publicized the rescue on Facebook, raised money for ACT Ohio through said publicity, and then financially abandoned Cheyenne. Baldwin's comments about not having the money to invest in the dog caused the needless killing of Cheyenne.

COUNT 53 PEE WEE

Pee Wee was an eight-year-old male Chow mix. Baldwin rescued the dog on January 24, 2015 from a neglect situation. ACT Ohio placed Pee Wee with a foster Theresa Balsiger. Pee Wee had some health conditions. Those were treated and the dog was doing well. During the near four months stay with Balsiger Pee Wee did well. He got along with her nine other dogs and two cats. The dog was extremely social and at ease in all situations in her home and out with the public.

Balsiger adopted a big dog, Kosar, from ACT on June 6, 2015 at Baldwin's request. Pee Wee was returned to Baldwin as part of the deal. On June 8, 2015 Baldwin took Pee Wee to RAH and had the dog put down. He told RAH staff that Pee Wee was 14 years old, had been receiving palliative care, and his neurological status and condition were declining and that Pee Wee's quality of life was poor. Two expert witnesses for the State testified in substance that there was no evidence to support Baldwin's statements, nothing in the veterinary records and nothing in the history of the dog. Baldwin's statements are completely contradicted by the testimony of Theresa Balsiger. Baldwin adopted out a large dog, Kosar, in exchange for taking back Pee Wee. Two days later he had Pee Wee put down because he could no longer be bothered. Baldwin's deception about Pee Wee's condition caused the dog to be euthanized. It was a needless killing.

CRUELTY

COUNT 47 MISTY

Misty was a five-year-old American Staffordshire Terrier. Baldwin rescued the dog from the Jefferson County Humane Society on October 10, 2014. On April 8, 2015 Baldwin took Misty to Rascal Animal Hospital. Misty was admitted, she stayed several days for testing to determine the cause of her symptoms. She was diagnosed with babesia, a blood parasite usually transmitted through dog bites. The major symptom is anemia. Others dogs at ACT were susceptible to infection through exposure to Misty. No other ACT dogs were tested. Baldwin was told to bring Misty back for further testing within a week to 10 days. Baldwin never brought Misty back for needed follow-up testing.

On April 23, 2015, June 30 2015 and August 21, 2015, Misty fought with Roxie. Roxie was not tested. Two young healthy dogs died at ACT, Lulu on or about July 8, 2015 and Zylah on August 5, 2015. Baldwin did not take either dog to RAH for necropsy. Dr. Gonzalez testified that necropsy could have explained the cause of death and was free of charge to rescues.

Baldwin's failure to provide follow-up testing and treatment for Misty constitutes cruelty to companion animals.

COUNT 48 MISTY

Misty and Roxie got into a serious fight on April 23, 2015. Both dogs suffered serious injuries. Baldwin's girlfriend, Lauren Schneiders, was present. After she broke up the dog fight Schneiders notified Baldwin and Dr. Michelle Gonzalez of RAH about the need for veterinary care.

Baldwin never brought Misty to a vet for care after the April 23, 2015 fight. His failure to act constituted cruelty to a companion animal.

COUNT 49 ROXIE

See Count 48 above.

Baldwin never brought Roxie to a vet for care after the April 23, 2015 fight. His failure to act constitutes cruelty to a companion animal.

COUNT 51 CHEYENNE

Cheyenne's end of life was covered in Count 52. The dog came into Baldwin's control on May 25, 2016. After having Cheyenne for about one month foster Lesley Seaman alerted ACT Ohio of the need for daily insulin. On July 19, 2016 Cheyenne was dropped off with Patricia Rogers suffering from ketoacidosis. She, Rogers, had been expecting the dog for two weeks. Rogers took Cheyenne to RAH. The diabetes diagnosis was confirmed. Cheyenne responded remarkably well to insulin treatment. Putting together a time line based upon the testimony of Lesley Seaman and Patricia Rogers the following becomes clear. Baldwin was alerted to the medical emergency near the beginning of July 2016. The dog went without insulin until July 19, 2016. Rogers described Cheyenne's condition as under-weight, panting, trembling, drooling, unable to walk more than a few feet, laid down and couldn't get back up.

Baldwin's failure to use Act Ohio funds to provide insulin was cruelty to Cheyenne.

GRAND THEFT 2913.02 (A)(1) & (B)(4) F-4

COUNT 13 FIREARM

On August 21, 2015 Baldwin purchased a .45 caliber Glock Model 21 handgun, Serial No. WXB926 for \$537.49. Baldwin filled out the Federal Firearms application at "Build a Gun", a firearms store located in Columbus, Ohio. Baldwin paid for the gun using the fundraising@actoh.org PayPal account. Pursuant to R.C. 1702.23, the weapon was the property of ACT Ohio because funds from public donations to ACT Ohio were used to pay for the handgun.

There is circumstantial evidence that the gun was operable. August 21, 2015 was the day that Misty and Roxie fought. Baldwin bought the gun that day. Through Facebook messenger he told Lauren Schneiders that he had to put Misty down. No euthanasia record was found for Misty. Additionally, Baldwin posted a picture of the weapon at Facebook and commented that he was cleaning the gun after shooting it.

On February 7, 2018, during a search warrant execution on the ACT Ohio property, Union County sheriffs found, in a rental van, the .45 Glock. It was found with Baldwin's Humane Agent badge pinned to a vest with "Animal Cruelty Investigation" printed on the back of the vest. It was loaded, a round chambered, with a loaded magazine and a spare magazine. The evidence was photographed and returned to the Defendant. Presumably it was taken to California by Baldwin when he left Ohio on February 8, 2018. No evidence was presented indicating that the weapon has since been seen.

The firearm was the property of ACT Ohio. It should have been disposed of according to statutory procedure. Baldwin was aware of such procedure as he disposed of ACT Ohio motor vehicles in accordance with law.

GRAND THEFT 2913.02 (A)(3) & (B)(2) F-4

COUNT 39

Baldwin received \$1,000 from Litsa and Angelo Kargakos to remove Remi's Dangerous Dog Designation. (See Count 1 of this decision.) There is no evidence that Baldwin did a single thing concerning the Dangerous Dog Designation.

Baldwin and ACT Ohio boarded two dogs, B-Dog between September 25, 2015 and November 30, 2015 and Peanut Butter between September 25, 2015 and November 11, 2015. Robin Romminello, the owner of the boarding establishment, Home Pet Care Kennel, testified that ACT Ohio never paid the boarding cost for either dog. The cost exceeded \$2,200.00.

On January 24, 2016 Baldwin started a "Go Fund Me" account for a homeless man, Vincent Mossholder. After Baldwin paid expenses to help Mossholder and gave him \$350.00 there was approximately \$1,000 in donations still in the account. Baldwin kept the money in the ACT Ohio account for his personal use.

King, was a runaway dog. On July 4, 2016, he was shot and wounded by a police officer. There were a number of social media fundraisers for King. Baldwin became involved. He took control of King and some of the money. King was treated at RAH at a cost of \$1,015.25. After paying that vet bill Baldwin kept \$1,643.00 of the donations in the ACT Ohio PayPal account, fundraising@actoh.org for his personal use.

Baldwin promoted the idea of having a joint fundraiser for ACT Ohio and RAH. Dr. Gonzalez testified that Baldwin agreed the money would be split, half of the proceeds going to Rascal Charities and the other half going to pay on ACT Ohio's outstanding vet bill at RAH. Based on that agreement RAH participated in the fundraiser. The net profit from the April 1, 2016 event was more than \$16,00.00. Baldwin kept the money in ACT Ohio's account. Although two payments were made to RAH from Act Ohio in the summer of 2016, no funds were paid to Rascal Charities. Baldwin had sole control of the ACT Ohio account until August 2016.

The value of the property or services stolen in the five thefts detailed above is \$7, 500 or more.

GRAND THEFT 2913.02 (A)(2) & (B)(2) F-4

COUNT 41

Baldwin is charged with stealing \$7,500 or more from the ACT Ohio and TOPS. State's Exhibit 19 are the ACT Ohio articles of incorporation filed with the Ohio Secretary of State. Baldwin prepared and signed the documents. ACT Ohio was a 501(C)(3) corporation dedicated

exclusively to charitable purposes and not for gain or individual profit. All expenditures should have been made in furtherance of assisting and equipping rural humane agents to enforce animal cruelty laws.

ACT Ohio board meetings minutes, (such as they are), show no salary or stipend was ever adopted for Baldwin. No evidence was introduced to show that Baldwin was entitled to claim a salary. Baldwin simply treated the ACT Ohio business accounts as his personal accounts.

John Demoss testified as an expert in forensic accounting. He reviewed bank and PayPal records for ACT Ohio accounts and Baldwin's personal account.

Baldwin misappropriated charitable funds from ACT Ohio bank accounts to pay all of his rent expenses for nearly three years, approximately \$19,000 personally and \$750 for his business "Save Them Dogs".

Baldwin used ACT Ohio's PayPal and bank accounts to cover his own personal expenses. These include video games and game accessories, theater tickets, hundreds of individual restaurant purchases and cash withdrawals of \$16,758. There was virtually no bookkeeping or record keeping. No receipts were located to match the cash withdrawals to their respective purchases. One cash withdrawal was used to pay Baldwin's child support obligations. Baldwin used charitable funds to cover the cost of cell phone plans and expenses far beyond the needs of a 2 employee charitable organization such as ACT Ohio.

The lack of internal controls, separation of duties and board level oversight enabled Baldwin to use the ACT Ohio funds for his personal needs and wants.

Baldwin became interim director of TOPS in January 2014. He resigned at the December TOPS board meeting 2015. He was paid \$20 per hour for a 40 hour work week. It was later reduced to 30 hours per week. Baldwin spent a considerable amount of time doing ACT Ohio work while he was being paid by TOPS. He was confronted by TOPS board President Randy Schmidt about being AWOL from TOPS. He admitted the transgression and offered to donate money back to TOPS. Baldwin never donated the money. Baldwin had access to a TOPS debit card. He missed-used it and the card was taken from him.

Accordingly Baldwin used his positions with ACT Ohio and TOPS to steal over \$7500 of charitable funds.

ENGAGING IN A PATTERN OF CORRUPT ACTIVITY

2923.32 (A)(1) & (B)(1) F-1

COUNT 42

Baldwin used his close association with ACT Ohio to engage in a pattern of corrupt activity between January 1, 2014 and February 8, 2020. The pattern of corrupt activity consisted of Baldwin, individually and on behalf of ACT, committing theft by soliciting funds from individuals and organizations with the funds not going for their intended purposes; committing fraud against individuals and organizations; making many false statements through emails and other social media accounts as detailed in this decision. A number of the incidents of corrupt activity are felonies of the third degree; Bribery R.C. 2921.02 F-3, Tampering with Records R.C. 2913.42 F-3 and Grand Theft of a Firearm R.C. 291302 F-3.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, Steffen Evan Baldwin is found GUILTY, beyond a reasonable doubt of the following Counts in this indictment.

Bribery 2921.02 (B) & (E) F-3

Count 1

Telecommunications Fraud 2913.05 (A)(B) & (C)

Count 2 F-4 (value greater than \$1000)

Count 9 F-5
Count 40 F-3 (value greater than \$7,500)

Telecommunications Fraud 2913.05 (A) & (C) F-5
Counts 10, 11, 17, 21, 22, 26, 28, 37 and 38

Tampering with Records 2913.42 (A)(1) & (B)(4) F-3
Counts 3 and 5

Tampering with Records 2913.42 (A)(2) & (B)(4) F-3
Count 4 and 6

Cruelty to Companion Animals 959.131 (E)(1) & 959.99 (E)(4) F-5
Counts 8 and 12

Cruelty to Companion Animals 959.131 (D)(1) & 959.99 (E)(3) F-5
Counts 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53

Grand Theft of Firearm 2913.02.(A)(1) & (B)(4) F-3
Count 13

Grand Theft 2913.02 (A)(3) & (B)(2) F-4
Count 39

Grand Theft 2913.02 (A)(2) & (B)(2) F-4
Count 41

Engaging in Pattern of Corrupt Activity 2923.32 (A)(1) & (B)(1) F-1
Count 42

Steffan Evan Baldwin is found NOT GUILTY of the following counts in this indictment.

Telecommunications Fraud 2913.05 (A) & (C)

Counts 16, 19 and 31

Tampering with Records 2913.42 (A)(1) & (B)(4)

Count 24

Tampering with Records 2913.42 (A)(2) & (B)(4)

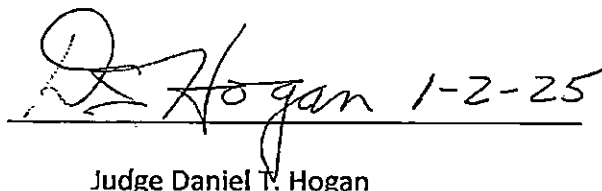
Count 25

Cruelty to Companion Animals 959.131 (D)(1), 959.99 (E)(3)

Counts 43 and 44

The Court ORDERS a Pre-sentence Investigation. Bond remains the same. A date for sentencing will be determined based upon PSI completion. The State and the Defendant shall file sentencing memorandums ten days before sentencing.

It is so ORDERED.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Hogan 1-2-25". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

Judge Daniel T. Hogan

Cynde Hesson

From: Cynde Hesson
Sent: Thursday, January 2, 2025 11:41 AM
To: Adult Probation
Cc: danhogan7031@gmail.com
Subject: 20CR0099 -BALDWIN - DECISION
Attachments: 20CR0099 - BALDWIN - DECISION.pdf

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