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MAN AND WOMAN PLEAD GUILTY TO ROLE IN HANSON ARSON FIRE

BROCKTON – Two people have pleaded guilty to charges that they set fire to an abandoned restaurant in Hanson, Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz has announced.

Late yesterday, Patricia Harrison, 63, and Wayne Cummings, 52, both of Buzzards Bay, pleaded guilty in Plymouth Superior Court to one count of Burning of a Building. Judge Maynard Kirpalani sentenced the pair to probation for two years.

On July 6, 2018 at approximately 2:54 pm, Hanson Fire Department received a report of a fire at JJ's Pub, an abandoned commercial property at 16 Liberty Street. Upon arrival, firefighters discovered the interior of the structure to be fully engulfed in fire. The blaze required a third alarm response, and took some time to extinguish due to the full involvement of the structure. Two Hanson firefighters sustained heat exhaustion injuries battling the blaze, and the building was deemed a total loss as a result of this fire.

Massachusetts State Police Fire and Explosion Investigation Section and Hanson Police and Fire Department determined that the cause was ruled incendiary and an investigation commenced. As a result of the investigation, Hanson Police obtained a criminal complaint charging Alfred C. Russo, 79, of Bourne, with one count of Burning of a Dwelling and two counts of Arson Causing Injuries to a Firefighter. Russo served as a member of the Boston Fire Department from 1969-1995, when he retired as a firefighter assigned to the Marine Unit.

Investigators determined that Harrison was the owner of the abandoned property and Cummings was an acquaintance of Harrison's. The investigation found that Harrison, along with Cummings enlisted the aid of Russo to set fire to the pub. On the day of the fire, Cummings provided Russo with the key to the restaurant, along with a blow torch. Russo entered the pub and dragged a rubber tire into the establishment and placed the lit blow torch in the middle of the tire. On the day after the fire, Harrison filed a \$415,000 insurance claim with her provider.

Russo is scheduled to go to trial on the charges on April 11.

Assistant District Attorney Alex Zane prosecuted the case, which was investigated by Hanson Police, Hanson Fire, and the Massachusetts State Police Fire and Explosion Investigation Section.