

Victim Impact Statement  
Mayor Jim Burke, City of Dixon, Illinois

Thank you, judge, for allowing me a few minutes to speak on behalf of the Dixon community, the victim in the Rita Crundwell embezzlement case.

Rita was trusted, admired, and well thought of by many, especially the approximately 100 co-workers and other city employees who interacted with her almost daily, including the community at large.

Many have asked themselves and others the “what,” “where” and “how” of this profound fault line in her character that led to this massive rip-off of public money. I state emphatically this theft-without-conscience attitude was not a product of her City Hall work environment.

Rita began working part-time at City Hall while in her teens. Her immediate supervisor and mentor was city Treasurer Darlene Herzog, now deceased. Darlene has a flawless level of honesty and ethics, which were in full view as she taught Rita the ins and outs of city finances. Darlene groomed Rita to be her replacement upon retirement.

There was, and is, no culture of corruption in City Hall. The city has a long tradition of impeccable integrity by those, both elected and appointed, holding the reins of government. A mindset of dishonesty was not encouraged, demonstrated, or foisted upon Rita Crundwell by any elected or appointed city officials. The seed of dishonesty was planted, nurtured and brought to full bloom by Rita. She was the sole cause of Crundwell and crime becoming synonymous.

Rita has sacrificed everything for a life of glitter and gold, constructed on a deck of cards with no foundation. She was motivated, in the words of Dixon Police Chief Danny Langloss, by trophies and horses. Or, in the words of Shakespeare's tragedy of King Richard the Third, "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!"

I am sure when Rita stole her first city dollar, she thought she would pay it back someday. However, at some point she had to know, as she embezzled larger and larger amounts, that it would be impossible to repay, but she continued to steal anyway.

As the city's chief financial officer, Rita Crundwell had a ringside seat, viewing the consequences to the community of her ongoing embezzlement of public funds. She drove on the streets that didn't get repaired or replaced because of her theft! She saw city employees every day that had gone over 2 years without raises because of her theft! She saw the Street Department trucks well past their useful life that couldn't be replaced because of her theft! She saw the results of deferred maintenance in almost every city department because of her theft!

In short, Rita Crundwell saw firsthand the penalty the city was paying for financing her high-flying 20-plus years' super-ego lifestyle, averaging well over \$2 million per year. She had the good life without conscience and regard for the taxpayers and her co-workers. Rita must pay the price!

We are aware that since her arrest, Rita has cooperated with the authorities, which is appreciated. However, with it being a blatant, almost defenseless crime, she had no good option. Cooperation must not negate serious punishment for wrongdoing.

Your honor, the Dixon community is not vindictive! The Dixon community is not seeking revenge! However, the Dixon community is pleading for justice in a sentence for Rita Crundwell that is commensurate with the theft of \$53 million of public money.

On behalf of the Dixon community, I appeal and implore you to sentence Rita Crundwell to prison for the maximum term allowed for the crime she committed against her fellow citizens.

Thank you, judge, and thanks to the FBI, the U.S. attorneys, and the U.S. Marshals Service for assistance in bringing a successful resolution to this traumatic offense against the city of Dixon.