

## MONMOUTH COUNTY NEWS

# Ex-Howell official avoids jail in stalking

■ William B. Robinson will be permitted to continue his treatment at a Pennsylvania facility for sex offenders.

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FREEHOLD BUREAU

FREEHOLD — A former Howell Township official who pleaded guilty to charges of stalking area women will be permitted to continue his treatment at a Pennsylvania treatment facility for sex offenders rather than going to jail.

William B. Robinson, 39, the former chairman of the township Environmental Commission, probably will be in treatment for up to six months and will be on probation for five years.

Judge John A. Ricciardi ruled at his sentencing yesterday.

Robinson received a stern warning from Ricciardi to avoid any contact with any of the nine women who said Robinson stalked them or risk going to jail.

"I will not permit any other young lady to be terrified by him, to be looking over their shoulder to lose one minute of sleep over this," Ricciardi said. "I'll segregate him from society if necessary, if I have to do so."

A new state stalking law will require a restraining order be placed on Robinson barring him from contact with any of the victims, Ricciardi said. If Robinson violates the restraining order, new charges would be filed against him and it would be a violation of his probation.

Police said Robinson began stalking

women in August 1985 when he sent obscene letters to the offices of several female real estate agents. During the following months, he left similar obscene notes in the car doors of women's homes in the development where Robinson lived at the time. Robinson pleaded guilty to three counts of stalking. Up to nine women were stalked by Robinson, authorities said.

Robinson apologized yesterday for his actions. "I'm very sorry for what I did, what I did to the victims and my family," he said. "I look at my actions every day in the face. I'm in recovery and I'm knocking down the walls of denial."

One of Robinson's victims, Elizabeth Harris, who was in court yesterday, said she was relieved that the case has finally been resolved. But

being in court was like "reliving everything all over. I don't know if the fear will ever go away," she said.

Robinson's lawyer, Donald M. Lomurro, said Robinson already spent 79 days in the Monmouth County Jail. He said that Robinson is dealing with the problems that stem from his childhood. Robinson's mother died when he was born and his father blamed him, Lomurro said. He had little education because he was on the streets when he was 14 and he never had the guidance of parents, family or religion.

"Some people are totally ill-prepared for that race for life, they start that race anyway," Lomurro said.

Ricciardi acknowledged that Robinson does have deep psychological problems. He said one reason Robinson was not sentenced to jail was he did not have a criminal record. But

Ricciardi added that, "Nobody is going to convince me this man does not know what is right and wrong, what hurts (his victims), what scares them."

Two of Robinson's victims gave emotional statements in court. Harris told Robinson that his actions had changed "how I looked at life forever."

"The days you spent in jail are nothing compared to the days I spent in fear," she said.

Another victim, Janet Briggs, also of Howell Township, said Robinson's actions carry a "life sentence" for her. "He knows where I live and where I work, I live in fear he'll find me," she said. "Every day we hear about victims who are harmed by someone who has court orders against them. I sincerely hope Mr. Robinson will be treated and incarcerated."