



# BRANSON NEWS



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## Mayoral candidate Howden ends bid

By Madison Bryan  
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file photo

Mayoral candidate Marshall Howden has ended his bid to become the mayor of Branson.

Marshall Howden, a mayoral candidate for the April 6 Branson Municipal Election has officially ended his bid to become mayor.

In a press release on Mon. March 8, Howden announced the end of his bid and included his endorsement for mayoral candidate Larry Milton.

Howden's press release is below in its entirety:

Marshall Howden, Commissioner on Branson's Planning and Zoning Board, today ended his bid to become Mayor of Branson and provided a full endorsement for the campaign of candidate Larry Milton.

Howden and Milton have been allies on a number of issues the past several years and Howden is throwing his full support behind Milton to

ensure he is elected Mayor on April 6, 2021.

"As a community we all need to get behind a conservative candidate for Mayor of Branson," Howden said. "In an effort to consolidate the conservative vote, I am giving my full support to Larry Milton for mayor. We must ensure a victory for the liberty-minded individuals who call Branson home, and supporting Larry is the best way to do that. He's the voice we need for Branson and I encourage all of my supporters to fully support him in the upcoming election."

Milton added, "I'm grateful for Marshall's friendship and support. He has been a leading advocate for the shows in our community for a number of years now, and

he will be an important part of the revitalization of Branson. His supporters can trust that I will be a true servant leader for our community and their voices will be heard at city hall again when I am mayor."

Howden believes that Milton is the only remaining candidate who will truly represent the interests of the citizens. He said he is committed to not only supporting Milton, but actively campaigning for him up to the April 6 election.

According to Howden, there is currently a plan to release a joint video with Milton at a later time that will contain more information.

This video, once released, will be will posted on Howden's personal Facebook page.

  
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## Stone Co. man sentenced to five years

By AJ Meakins  
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A Stone County man was sentenced to five years for his role in the endangerment of a 4 year old boy, who suffered injuries and was extremely malnourished in Nov. 2020.

Court documents state that Richard A. Hilliker, 52, entered a plea agreement and was sentenced to five years in the Missouri Department of Corrections for one count of 1st Degree Endangering the Welfare of a Child, Serious Physical Injury - Sexual Conduct.

Hilliker also received a 5 year sentence for a second count of child endangerment but that sentence was suspended by the judge. The charges of abuse or neglect of a child was dismissed, according to court documents.

According to a Stone County Sheriff's Office press release made Dec. 4, 2020 detectives with the Stone County Sheriff's Office concluded a month-long investigation that stemmed from a 911

call made to Stone County Central Dispatch on Nov. 6, 2020 involving a medical emergency of a 4 year old boy who was unresponsive and was transported to CoxSouth Hospital and then airlifted to Kansas City in critical condition.

According to Branson Tri-Lakes News archives, Hilliker was arrested in the case with three others, the child's mother Dessa Barton, 26, William Dalton McLendon, 26, and Katherine Kost, 53. Prior to the preliminary hearing held in December Stone County Prosecuting Attorney, Matt Selby filed amended charges charging each of the defendants with seven Class B felonies of child abuse, child neglect, child endangerment and a kidnapping charge due to the confinement of the child in a homemade, outside crate and a bathroom. Each of those counts could carry the potential of five to 15 years.

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Richard A. Hilliker

Courtesy of Stone County Jail

## Arraignment in vehicle break-in case

By AJ Meakins  
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Joseph Ryan Swearengin, 34, of Battlefield, Missouri is being held in the Taney County Jail on six charges stemming from his arrest in connection with a string of vehicle break-ins.



Courtesy of Taney County Jail

Joseph Ryan Swearengin

According to two March 2 probable cause statements obtained from Taney County Prosecuting Attorney William Duston, Swearengin was arrested on the 100 block of Prairie Dunes Drive in Branson on the following charges:

- Unlawful for certain persons to possess a firearm
- Stealing a firearm
- Possession of a controlled substance
- Possession of drug paraphernalia
- Stealing
- Trafficking drugs 2nd degree

According to the probable cause statement, Swearengin caused property damage by prying a tonneau cover off the bed of a 2011 F150 damaging the rails that held it in place. He also allegedly broke out the middle back sliding window to gain entry to the cab of the truck to steal the contents within.

According to the statement, after Swearengin allegedly broke into several vehicles he ran from one of the victim's vehicles to a maroon Chevrolet Tahoe

and laid under the vehicle. When police arrived on scene they found the key to the Tahoe in the suspects pocket.

According to Branson Tri-Lakes News archives, after further investigation Swearengin may be connected to some other theft cases in the Branson area.

While completing the inventory of the vehicle after Swearengin's arrest, police found a prescription pill bottle with Swearengin's name on it, a pouch with a crystalline substance, twenty gelatin pill capsules of what officer's believe to be either Fentanyl or heroin in a plastic baggie, a syringe, and a backpack. The backpack contained a stolen Glock 19 9mm handgun, a gray lock box containing a CTG .38 caliber revolver, three holsters, some 9mm ammunition and menthol cigarettes.

According to the statements, a Branson Police Officer conducted two field tests on the substance within one of the capsules.

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