

## Faerber case closed after 20 possible victims identified

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State agents investigating former Collier County School Board member Nelson Faerber Jr. identified 20 possible victims of sexual abuse, including a 7-year-old child, dating back about 30 years, according to case files and the spokesman for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Some of the people identified as victims came forward to investigators after Faerber, 52, fatally shot himself in the head July 13. Even with its target dead, the agency continued its investigation to the end and released dozens of pages of reports Monday.

"It's a pretty bad case, so we're ready to be done with it. It's closed," said Larry Long, a spokesman for the agency in Fort Myers.

Faerber, a longtime Naples defense attorney who also was on the School Board for 14 years, was facing a possible life sentence at the time of his suicide in a North Naples park. Faerber was charged with repeatedly having sex with a boy during a four-year period, beginning when the child was 12.

Faerber had pleaded innocent and vowed to fight the charges. Instead, he was said to have attempted suicide by overdosing on over-the-counter pain medicine in Wyoming on April 29, then shot himself less than three months later.

State prosecutor Scott Cupp dropped the unlawful sex acts charges against Faerber after the suicide. However, Florida Department of Law Enforcement investigators had already received a number of leads identifying more possible victims. So agents continued their interviews, even without a defendant left to prosecute.

"We still had these people we needed to interview. We needed to see if there was any information we needed to add to the case and also to see if any of them needed help," Long said. "There are 20 possible victims going all the way back to the early '70s."

Parts of the case reports were heavily redacted by the agency before their release Monday. The

names and any other information that could identify potential victims were blacked out, making some pages difficult to decipher.

Four possible victims had already identified themselves to investigators, and others who had read about Faerber's arrest and subsequent suicide came forward to say they too had been abused. Some live in Naples; others live outside Florida and even the United States. The abuse Faerber is alleged to have committed began when he was 14, Long said.

One said Faerber performed oral sex on him 10 to 20 times over two years when he was a child. He told investigators he refused to reciprocate on Faerber, who had "offered to pay for him to go to college and law school and even offered him a partnership at his (Faerber's) law firm."

Another man told investigators, according to the report, "Faerber provided he and his mother with free legal representation several times, and Faerber began to take interest in him. He said Faerber never engaged in sexual activity with him unless he (Faerber) drugged him."

One woman told investigators Faerber tried to sexually assault her in the bathroom while baby-sitting when she was 7. Faerber stopped his sexual advances when the girl's 4-year-old sister began banging on the locked door, according to the reports.

Faerber's attorney, Donald Day, was unavailable for comment Monday. So was another lawyer, Michael McDonnell, who represented Faerber after his April 29 arrest.

Long said no further charges will be brought in connection with the case. Authorities have complained that past allegations of abuse against Faerber couldn't be prosecuted because of problems with the statute of limitations, which bars charges after a certain length of time has passed after a crime is said to have been committed. One person, Bronson Page, said he was a victim and filed a civil lawsuit against Faerber in 2001, only to withdraw it later that day.

Faerber was released from Collier County jail on \$100,000 bond after his attempted suicide in Wyoming. A Naples psychiatrist testified he didn't believe Faerber was a threat to harm himself or others.

In the criminal case, court records say Faerber had sex with the child, now 19, between 1997 and 2001. He met the boy, whose name won't be published because of the sexual nature of the case, through Faerber's son's Little League team.

Prosecution evidence shows numerous e-mails believed to have been written by Faerber in which the attorney expressed his love for the boy and his unhappiness when the child began to have less contact with Faerber. The 19-year-old gave a statement to investigators after initially denying the abuse took place, according to case files.

The Collier County Sheriff's Office also released documents relating to its investigation of Faerber's suicide. Authorities traced ownership of the .38-caliber Colt Cobra revolver to Faerber, who purchased the gun in March 1978.

The autopsy report indicates Faerber wasn't under the influence of alcohol at the time of his death. Traces of a prescription anti-depressant, but not of other drugs, were found in his system.

Authorities released copies of numerous suicide notes written by Faerber and left in envelopes in the car he drove to Ridgewood Park, where he shot himself within a few hours. The notes included instructions on delivery of the notes written to his parents, siblings and three children.

The notes show Faerber believed he could have successfully fought the criminal charges. He killed himself because he didn't want to see his family be continuously humiliated by ongoing media coverage of the case, he wrote.

"Every minute of the day, and the long, long hours of the night, were spent worrying, debating, in sadness, in depression, in a feeling of hopelessness," Faerber wrote.

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