

# Ex-Grand Island employee gets probation for stealing from senior center

By [Stephen T. Watson](#) | Published May 2, 2019 | Updated May 2, 2019

A former supervisor at a Town of Grand Island senior center was sentenced Thursday morning to five years probation for stealing \$116,000 in cash over a six-year period to feed her gambling habit.

Barbara Gannon, 71, pleaded guilty Feb. 19 before Erie County Judge Sheila DiTullio to second-degree grand larceny, a felony. She faced 15 years in prison. "This whole situation is sad. Sad for you, sad for Grand Island," but the town's seniors felt the brunt of the blow from someone they trusted, DiTullio said.

Gannon's probation conditions forbid her from gambling or entering a casino and also require her to attend counseling for a gambling addiction. She must also perform community service that does not involve handling money. "I pray for Ms. Gannon and those she hurt so recklessly," said Grand Island Supervisor Nathan McMurray, who spoke at the sentencing hearing. Gannon did not speak.

McMurray urged the judge to impose probation rather than a prison term, and DiTullio said McMurray's statement helped to persuade her to sentence Gannon to probation. The judge, McMurray and Gannon's attorney, Paul Fallon, also noted her age, her lack of a prior criminal record, her poor health and her long service to the town as mitigating factors.

Gannon has paid back the town \$6,000 and agreed to reimburse Grand Island the rest of the money, at \$200 per month, though District Attorney John J. Flynn said it's unlikely she'll ever make close to full restitution.

Prosecutors launched an investigation into the missing money more than a year ago and in February criticized the town for its lack of internal financial controls.

Gannon, a Grand Island resident, retired in December 2017 after serving as recreation supervisor with the town's Golden Age Center for a number of years. She earned \$50,000 in her final year on the job, according to payroll records published on the SeeThroughNY website.

Town officials previously told The Buffalo News they learned of the missing money in January 2018 and turned the case over to the District Attorney's Office at that time. A town accountant went through the center's financial records after Gannon's retirement and noticed some unpaid invoices that led to discovery of the thefts.

Gannon, according to Flynn, set up a bank account to handle payments made by seniors participating in trips organized by the Golden Age Center, but she was the only person who had to approve deposits or withdrawals from the account. Between 2011 and 2017, over the course of numerous transactions, Gannon set aside or removed town money for her own purposes, Flynn said.

Candace K. Vogel prosecuted the case.