On March 26, 2013, the Port Wentworth Police Department was called to investigate an attempted sexual assault on South Coastal Highway.

According to the victim, Mary Ann Steptoe, she was attacked by a man claiming to be a city employee and was forced inside her residence. Steptoe was able to contact 911 during the attack and the attacker supposedly fled the scene as police arrived.

The Port Wentworth Police Department took this report very seriously and used all resources available to diligently investigate it, said Steven Holmes, the department’s criminal investigations division commander.

A forensic sketch artist from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation was brought in from Atlanta to complete a composite sketch of the suspect. The sketch was distributed in the media and posted at businesses in the area of the attack.

Several anonymous tips were phoned in to Crimestoppers and were followed up by investigators.

When investigators received a copy of the audio from Steptoe’s 911 call, they noticed several discrepancies from what Steptoe had told them. This led to further review of the evidence gathered at the crime scene and a deeper investigation into Steptoe’s past.
When reviewing the evidence, 911 audio, and past incidents involving Steptoe, it became apparent that the scene was staged, Holmes said.

All the evidence gathered by investigators was presented to the Chatham County Grand Jury on Aug. 7. The grand jury returned an indictment on Steptoe for false statements and writings and false report of a crime.

“There are many women out there who have to live with the scars of a sexual assault and have had their lives changed forever by the trauma. To have someone falsely report an incident that serious just for attention is just appalling to me. Countless man hours and resources were expended during this investigation. Those were hours and resources that could have been used to address the needs of the community that we are sworn to protect.” Said Matthew Libby, Director of Public Safety for the city of Port Wentworth.

Attempts made to locate Steptoe have be unsuccessful and it is believed she could still be in the area or may have fled to Tennessee.

If anyone has information on her whereabouts they are asked to contact the Port Wentworth Police Department at 964-4360 or Crimestoppers at 234-2020.