Chief: Abduction, assault claims ‘affected this entire community’

By Alex Bridges — abridges@nvdaily.com

MIDDLETOWN — Town police took seriously a woman’s abduction and rape claim in July despite criticism to the contrary, the agency’s chief said this week.

But months later Middletown Police Department accuse Lynda Marie Carter with making up the story that struck fear in the small community, according to Chief R. Philip “Phil” Breeden.

A grand jury in Winchester Circuit Court in March indicted Carter on one count of filing a false report to law enforcement. Carter, of Gore, had given the report to town police in Winchester. The class 1 misdemeanor carries a maximum punishment of 12 months in jail and a $2,500 fine.

“My department got fried on this because people indicated that we weren’t taking this seriously but it is a big deal to us, a crime of this nature, because we don’t have this type of crime in our community all the time,” Breeden said.

Carter remains free on a $3,000 unsecured bond, Breeden said. She is scheduled to appear in the court April 24.
The chief would not disclose what motive, if any, Carter gave for filing the report, citing the case as pending in court.

Carter, according to Breeden, reported to police that she stopped at the Liberty gas station on Reliance Road sometime between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. to buy cigarettes. Carter told police two men in a green pickup truck came up behind her, put a bag over her head as she leaned into her vehicle, then forced her into the truck. The men drove to an unknown residence where they repeatedly raped and sodomized her, Breeden said, recalling the woman’s account. Carter told officers the men released her approximately five hours later on U.S. 11 north of Lord Fairfax Community College.

The chief noted that Carter told officers she walked back to her vehicle at the gas station then drove home to her residence in Gore, rather than to a hospital for an examination or to police to report the incident.

Over the course of several months the department continued its investigation. Breeden said in one interview months after the reported incident his department had collected items which they had to send to the state Office of Forensic Science for a DNA analysis. The department continued its investigation to look for the suspects in the reported incident, according to the chief. Police received criticism even just weeks after Carter filed the report because they had not made any arrests.

“There were many man hours and as you well know we took a lot of heat, myself included, as well as my department, all over this investigation, and we followed up every lead that came into this department,” Breeden said. “We were able to disprove this young lady’s story and then she later, during an interview, later admitted to us that she had in fact fabricated this story.”

The impact of the report spread beyond the investigation, according to the chief.

“Like I say this not only affected my department but it affected this entire community because, you know, we got a community here that we’re pretty proud of the fact that people go out in late evenings, early mornings, any time night or day, take walks or exercise or
whatever, and their kids go out and play and they don’t worry about ’em,” Breeden said. “By doing what she did she instilled a lot of fear in the community here and also in a lot of women that this just shouldn’t have happened to.”

The chief noted his fear that filing false reports, such as one alleging a crime of this kind, could deter people from going to police with legitimate claims.

The owner of Liberty gas station also took a financial hit after Carter filed the report and police sought the public’s help with solving the case, according to Breeden. The reported incident scared off customers, especially women, Breeden said.

“You know that lady didn’t do anything to deserve that at all so I would like people to know that the community of Middletown and the Liberty gas station are both safe places to visit,” the chief said.