Oak Ridge police release rape investigative report

By Bob Fowler

OAK RIDGE — In response to a public records inquiry, the Oak Ridge Police Department has released investigative reports in a case where a woman claims she was raped in June by a police officer or security guard.
The department at first refused the News Sentinel’s request for the initial incident report, saying the report wasn’t subject to public disclosure during a pending investigation.

The records request reversal came after Anderson District Attorney General Dave Clark said last month he was putting the high-profile case on “inactive but open” status.

Clark said no suspect was ever identified, the woman gave conflicting statements, and her story might have been sparked by jealousy because she came from California to find her ex-boyfriend living with another woman.

The 19 pages of investigative reports released this week describe how police, witnesses and a hospital nurse reacted to the California woman’s account of her alleged rape early June 3.

The reports tell how police learned of the allegations and describe initial interviews of the woman and of people she spoke to, including a construction worker who stopped to offer the woman a ride as she walked along South Rutgers Avenue after the purported attack.

Also described: How an unidentified emergency room nurse refused to allow police into the examination room with the woman after an initial interview.

“She (the nurse) told me that it was a conflict of interest for the Oak Ridge Police Department to
be speaking with (victim’s name redacted), so she (the nurse) contacted the Anderson County Sheriff’s Department and requested that a deputy sheriff come investigate,” police Lt. Matt Tedford reported.

The deputy was given a “rundown” of the allegations, Tedford reported, and soon after, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation took over the case at the request of Oak Ridge Police Chief James T. Akagi.

Different stories of the attack emerged during the initial predawn interviews. The woman told Officer Sherrill Selby she was alone in the apartment where she’d been staying with her ex-boyfriend and left “to catch fireflies” in a nearby field.

She told Selby a man she’d met earlier in a local restaurant several nights ago pulled up and yelled at her. He was driving what she believed was a “Ford Taurus police or security car,” according to the report, and was wearing what appeared to be a “black police uniform shirt and pants.”

She said she got in the back seat at the man’s request and was driven into a parking lot between Walmart and J.C. Penney in the former Oak Ridge Mall.

There, she said, she was told to get out of the car and put her hands on her head. She said she was
handcuffed, bent over onto the back seat of the car and raped.

After the rape, the woman said she was uncuffed, “slapped ... in the back of the head,” and told to go on — with a warning that if she reported the rape, “he would come back and kill her.”

The woman said the assailant was between 35 and 45 years old, with blonde, buzz-cut hair and about 6 feet tall. She said he was wearing a duty belt, and his car had the word “Tennessee” in green writing on it, along with four numbers.

A construction worker in town working on the Kroger project saw the woman walking on South Rutger Avenue and picked her up. She told Jawarski she’d been raped by a police officer.

The woman at first refused to go to the hospital but eventually consented, according to police reports. She at first gave a false name, telling authorities she was her ex-boyfriend’s girlfriend, Tedford reported.

While waiting in the emergency room for treatment, the woman saw an Oak Ridge police officer who walked in, and she told the construction worker that officer had been called by the rapist “as backup.”

Clark, in putting the case in an inactive status, acknowledged there “are a few hallmarks of truthfulness in her (the victim’s) report, including some embarrassing admissions.”
But Clark said those “indicators of honesty do not outweigh the many problems with her statements and the evidence or lack of evidence.”