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Evolve Bank CEO faces child porn charges

Bob Hartheimer fired after arrest by FBI

Lucas Finton

Memphis Commercial Appeal
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Evolve Bank & Trust's CEO was arrested by agents with the FBI Thursday, Oct. 23, and charged with distributing child pornography, according to inmate records.

According to jail records, Bob Hartheimer was charged with one count of distributing obscene material and sexual exploitation of a minor with a photograph. A search through federal dockets did not show any active criminal proceedings.

It is not uncommon for federal cases to be sealed until after an arrest is made.

Blake Ballin, the attorney representing Hartheimer, declined to comment on the case since it is currently under seal when asked what the charges

against the CEO were

Elizabeth Clement-Webb, a public affairs officer with the FBI Tennessee, confirmed FBI agents "executed a federal court authorized search warrant and arrest warrant" at the bank's headquarters, located at 6000 Poplar Ave. Clement-Webb could not, however, confirm any additional details about the warrant, and deferred to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Tennessee for further comment.

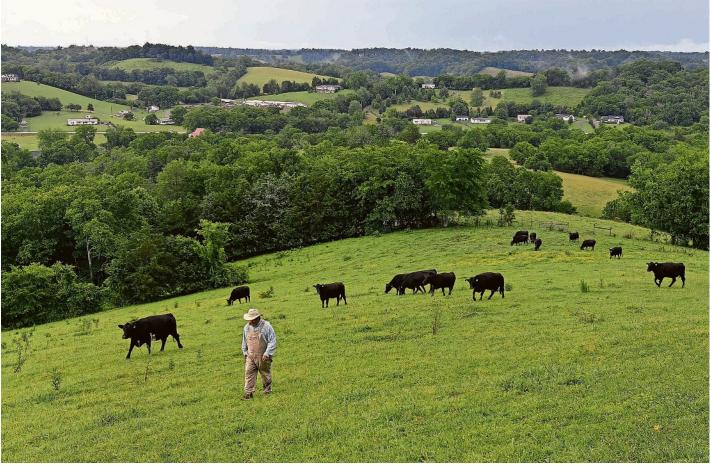
The U.S. Attorney's Office did not re-

spond to a request for comment at the time of publication.

Evolve, in a Friday afternoon statement, said its board of directors had fired Hartheimer "effective immediate-

"We are aware of the situation," the statement read. "The board of directors is treating this matter with the utmost seriousness and Mr. Hartheimer has been terminated effective immediately.

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Todd Jennings, owner of Rock Creek Farm, checks on his cows June 9 in Lynchburg. MARK ZALESKI/THE TENNESSEAN

Ranchers push back on call to import beef

Mackensy Lunsford

USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

President Donald Trump's suggestion to import beef from Argentina to ease prices has drawn sharp criticism from Tennessee cattle producers and national ranching groups.

The president floated the idea to reporters aboard Air Force One during an Oct. 19 flight to Washington.

"We would buy some beef from Argentina," he said. "If we do that, that will bring our beef prices down."

He had promised days earlier to address the issue as part of his efforts to curb inflation.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the average retail beef price in July was \$9.69 per pound — about \$1 higher than last year and \$3.60 more than in 2019.

A number of factors have kept prices stubbornly high, including widespread drought and the reemergence of a flesheating screwworm in Mexican cattle. In response to the pest's reestablishment, the USDA has suspended some imports of Mexican livestock to prevent the screwworm from spreading to U.S. herds.

Meanwhile, an administration official confirmed the United States is preparing to quadruple its beef purchases

from the South American country.

"Prices are way down in our country. The only cost that's really up is beef," Trump said in the Oval Office Oct. 22. "We're going to do something very quickly and easily on beef to get it down. The ranchers understand that."

But cattle ranchers in Tennessee are pushing back.

In an Oct. 21 statement, the Tennessee Cattlemen's Association, a Murfreesboro-based industry group representing thousands of Tennessee ranchers, said Trump's comments had already unsettled the market.

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"The Tennessee Cattlemen's Association is extremely concerned by the idea of bringing in more Argentinian beef to influence beef prices. Tennessee farmers need certainty, and President Trump's comments have unfortunately created chaos in the cattle market.

Tennessee cattle producers are proud of the beef we provide to our state and the nation, and we hope the President stands with us over Argentinian beef."

Gary Dering, TCA president

DESOTO COUNTY

Former youth pastor indicted on federal charges

Jacob Wilt

Memphis Commercial Appeal
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

A former youth pastor and convicted sex offender is facing federal charges, according to DeSoto County Sheriff Thomas Tuggle.

In a press conference on Oct. 23, Tuggle said Lindsey Whiteside had been indicted by a federal grand jury and arrested by the DeSoto County Sheriff's Office in partnership with the U.S. Marshals. She is being charged with transporting a minor across state lines with the purpose of engaging in sexual activity, the sheriff said.

Whiteside has pleaded not guilty. She remains in federal custody, with a detention hearing scheduled for Oct. 28 in the U.S. District Court for Northern Mississippi in Oxford.

Tuggle said his office, alongside the U.S. Attorney's Office, began building the case last year.

"Crimes against children will not be tolerated in DeSoto County," Tuggle said. "We are committed to pursuing justice and protecting the most vulnerable members of our community—our children."

On the local level, Whiteside previously pleaded guilty to sexual battery of a minor and was sentenced to three years of house arrest and seven years of probation. Prosecutors were seeking a 30-year sentence.

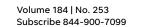
DeSoto County District Attorney Matthew Barton has filed a motion to resentence her and called her current sentence illegal, citing Mississippi code 47-5-1003(1). The code prohibits offenders convicted of sex crimes from being placed within an intensive supervision program.

DeSoto County Schools board member Michele Henley has faced calls to resign over a character letter written to the judge and testimony during Whiteside's sentencing.

More than 100 people attended an Oct. 16 DeSoto County Schools board meeting to demand Henley's resignation or removal. When various community members, including the victim's grandmother began to address the board freely, they immediately voted to move to a closed executive

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