

Chester County businessman who stole \$2M sentenced: 'Once a con man, always a con man'

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WEST CHESTER — To William Creighton Huyler III's father, the life he has led and the man he has grown into is one of almost unbroken accomplishment: Eagle Scout. Virginia state high school champion athlete. Ivy League graduate. Successful businessman. Loving father.

"I know Billy better than anyone else in this courtroom," William Creighton Huyler Jr. told the judge considering his son's fate at a sentencing proceeding in his son's theft cases on Thursday. "He is an achiever."

But to a member of one of the homeowner's associations from which Huyler siphoned off almost \$2 million in cash to keep his property management company running — and make it look more successful than it actually was — he is something else entirely.

"William Huyler is a con man," said Ben Greisler, president of the Rhonda Homeowners Association in West Whiteland, one of eight organizations whose money Huyler admitted stealing over a period of months in 2017 and 2018. "It is his nature. Once a con man, always a con man."

Huyler was sentenced to 40 months to 80 months in state prison — a minimum term of almost 3½ years — by Chester County Common Pleas Court Judge Ann Marie Wheatcraft after she heard from those who spoke against Huyler, like Greisler, and those who spoke in his favor, like his father, and attorneys for the two sides.

Wheatcraft noted that her duty was to take into consideration the protection of society from future crimes by Huyler — who has opened a new online retail business since his arrest in 2019 — but also the impact his actions had had on his victims as well as the community at large.

“The amount of money you stole from so many people and so much of our community in Chester County, and elsewhere, is huge,” the judge said in addressing the businessman. “It affects everyone in the community.” She noted that each of the homeowners' associations he stole from actually represent “hundreds of people whose money you stole.

“It’s just so widespread,” she declared.

Although she did not set a final amount of restitution that Huyler will be responsible to pay once his prison term is completed, it is certain to run more than \$2 million. She gave the prosecution and Huyler’s attorney the chance to submit final figures at a later date.

Before Wheatcraft handed down her sentence, Huyler, 42, of East Marlborough apologized to the victims of his thefts, as well as to employees of his company, East Hill Property Management, who had been left without their salaries or health benefits as Huyler kept the business’s dwindling funds a secret.

“I am sorry you all had to go through this,” he said, addressing those in the gallery of Wheatcraft’s courtroom. “I betrayed you because I was afraid to fail. I was afraid if I failed I would lose my family. Please allow me the chance to make it right.”

But Wheatcraft noted that although Huyler had made a down payment on his ultimate restitution to the homeowners’ associations of \$100,000 before coming to court on Thursday, he had done nothing to repay employees who found themselves in tens of thousands of dollars in debt because he had not paid their health insurance costs before closing the management company two weeks before Christmas in 2018.

“Why wouldn’t you take care of the people who were your friends first?” Wheatcraft asked. “Because you were trying to save your butt. It would have shown a lot more for your character if you had.”

In December, Huyler pleaded guilty to 53 felonies connected to approximately \$1.8 million he misappropriated from eight homeowners associations in East Goshen, Uwchlan, Upper Merion, and West Norriton in Pennsylvania, and in Marlton, N.J. and Kent County, Del.

Huyler contracted to provide management services through East Hill to nearly two dozen homeowners associations, then made unauthorized transfers of homeowners association funds between corporate, personal, and client bank accounts in 2017 and 2018, according to the plea.

He allegedly concealed his activities by sending false and misleading communications with victim association board members and bank representatives, laundering money through multiple bank accounts, making false entries on memo lines of checks, and producing and distributing

forged documents.

At the time of his plea, Chester County District Attorney Deb Ryan said: "Thousands of unsuspecting homeowners hired this defendant through their homeowners' associations to perform a service. Instead, he blatantly stole from them to perpetuate his fraudulent lifestyle and, in the process, broke people's trust."

In addition to the theft charges stemming from the homeowners' associations, Huyler had also been charged this year with counts relating to his fraudulently securing Small Business Administration (SBA) loans from the Wilmington Savings Fund Society, totaling \$1.25 million.

He pleaded guilty to two counts of theft by deception and two counts of forgery stemming from that case Thursday.

Huyler's attorney, Julia Rogers of the Ciccarelli Law Offices in West Chester, acknowledged in her presentation to Wheatcraft that her client would have to serve time in prison. But she urged the judge to allow him to serve his time in Chester County Prison, where he could arrange a work-release scheduled that would allow him to begin repaying his former clients sooner rather than later.

"He has the ability overtime to pay the money back," she said. "He has been working for two years to rebuild what he can and pay back every single dime that he stole."

In asking Wheatcraft to sentence Huyler to a minimum term of 7½ years behind bars, Senior Deputy District Attorney Ronald Yen and Assistant District Attorney John McCaul said that while he had shown remorse by pleading guilty rather than taking the cases to trial, that did not outweigh the need for him to face punishment that included a significant period of incarceration.

"Mr. Huyler is the same person who stole from his homeowners' association clients and snookered the bank," said Yen. "He has demonstrated that he is not able to earn substantial money in an honest way." To accept a premise that he should not face significant time in prison because he can earn millions of dollars, "is at best a pipe dream and at worst disingenuous and deceptive."

Huyler was led from the courtroom by county sheriff's deputies to begin serving his sentence immediately.

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SOURCE: staff writer Michael P. Rellahan call 610-696-1544, a staff reporter and editor at the Daily Local News since 1982. He has covered all kinds of news over the years but is now

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