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Developer arrested on cocaine charges

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Commercial real estate developer Joe Riddle III was arrested last week on drug charges, court records say.

Riddle, 49, of the 100 block of Great Oaks Street, is one of Cumberland County's most prominent developers. He heads Riddle Commercial Properties and other companies.

Riddle was charged June 9 with maintaining a vehicle for keeping a controlled substance, possession of cocaine and possession with intent to sell or distribute cocaine. All of the charges are felonies.

He was taken to the magistrate at the Cumberland County Detention Center and allowed to go free on a \$5,000 unsecured bail. A worksheet in Riddle's court file says he was polite and cooperative with the arresting officer. It also says he has bipolar disorder and a drug-abuse problem.

According to court and Fayetteville Police Department records, Officer David Singletary stopped Riddle while he was driving a GMC Yukon Denali in Fayetteville's Bonnie Doone neighborhood about 4:30 a.m. June 9.

Singletary stopped Riddle at Haddock and Cedric streets because his sport utility vehicle was similar to one reported to have been involved in a shooting in the neighborhood, police spokeswoman Jamie Smith said. The department has decided that Riddle was not at that shooting, she said.

Singletary asked Riddle to step out of the car, then patted him down, Smith said. The officer did the search for his own protection, she said.

A bag of what appeared to be powder cocaine was found in Riddle's pocket, she said. A smaller bag was in his wallet, she said. A magistrate's order says the cocaine totaled 6.6 grams.

Cumberland County court records say Riddle was found guilty of speeding in 1982. He has a number of traffic stops on his record since 1982, but charges in those instances were dismissed.

Riddle did not respond to a voicemail left at his office at Riddle Commercial Properties on Friday afternoon. An employee said he was in the office.

David Boliek, one of his lawyers, declined to comment about the case Friday afternoon.

District Attorney Ed Grannis said late Friday that he is going to closely watch the case to ensure Riddle is treated fairly. He said he has some new assistant district attorneys who might not be familiar with Riddle's position in the community.

"I just wanted to make sure an accident didn't occur," Grannis said. "It's very important that this case be handled no better or no worse than anyone else. It would be treated just like you would be or somebody from Cross Creek Court would, hopefully."

Riddle is a frequent newsmaker in Cumberland County for the many shopping centers and other commercial properties he develops.