

## Car-torcher gets suspended sentence

Posted by [TBN\\_Charles](#) On 04/23/2015

**La Plata, MD** - For Edward Lee Sigmon Jr., 36 of Upper Marlboro, a "bad decision" landed him in Charles County Circuit Court to face a second-degree arson charge before Judge Helen I. Harrington Thursday, April 23.

Sigmon set fire to his car May 3, 2014 in a remote wooded section of Charles County saying it had too much wrong with it to continue paying what he owed on the vehicle.

The defendant entered into a plea agreement with the state of Maryland Feb. 10.

Charles County Assistant State's Attorney Sarah Freeman told the court the state was asking for one year in jail and five years of supervised probation.

"The defendant does not appear to be very remorseful," Freeman said. "His motive was to get out of the \$14,000 owed on the car. He said it wasn't worth the money it would take to fix it.

"Your honor, this was in a heavily wooded area," she added. "This could have turned into a lot more than the car being burned. There are residences in the area. Various witnesses said it sounded like shotguns going off, that's how close it was to homes. We were fortunate that a passerby saw the fire and called authorities or it could have spread and endangered houses."

Sigmon's attorney, Joseph Vallario Jr., called the incident "a serious economic crime."

Vallario told the court that where the fire took place was a very rural area.

"It was a bad, terrible mistake," Vallario said.

The lawyer said Sigmon had no previous criminal history, not even a traffic ticket.

"He told me this is the first time he's ever been in a courthouse," Vallario said. "This is a person who has stayed out of trouble."

Vallario called his client a "person of character," saying Sigmon has worked for the Prince George's County Board of Education for 15 years.

"This act was an aberration," he admitted, "he just made a very poor choice."

The attorney said his client has continued making payments on the car even though it was destroyed in the fire.

"It was a very poor choice I made," Sigmon told the court. "I regret it every day."

"I see you filed an insurance claim on the car," Harrington said. "Was that the idea, to get them to pay it off?"

"Yes," Sigmon said.

"Not only do you not have a car now, you have a criminal record," the judge told him, but added, "I see no particular advantage to incarceration."

She sentenced the defendant to 10 years with all of the time suspended, giving him three years of unsupervised probation. Harrington also tacked on 160 hours of community service to be completed before July 1, 2016.

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