

CURIOUS PLEA DEALS AFOOT IN LANCASTER, PA

The curious rumored plea deal of Lancaster, PA Jan6er Sam Lazar has a twin now in the curious plea deal of James Breheny.

Lazar, who is from Ephrata, PA, was arrested almost exactly two years ago on assault and civil disorder charges. But he was more notable for his moniker – FacePlantBlowhard – and his networking after the attack with politicians, including Doug Mastriano.

After an extended detention fight, nothing much happened in Lazar's case. Then there was a year-long gap in the docket, followed by a notice of appearance of an AUSA who is handling some of the more important ongoing prosecutions.

Both Ryan Reilly and Lancaster Online's Dan Nephin seem to have gotten tipped off to a sealed hearing on March 17 that was, reportedly, a plea hearing.

NBC News spotted Rebeca Lazar, Lazar's sister who accompanied him to D.C. on Jan. 6, at the Washington D.C. federal courthouse, along with his family members. Lazar's case was before Judge Amy Berman Jackson, according to the source. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

But there's still nothing on the docket.

James Breheny, who has ties to the Oath Keepers, was arrested even before Lazar, in May 2021. He was linked to the Oath Keepers by dint of being added to their comms the day of the attack and – more importantly – inviting Stewart Rhodes to a coordinating event in Quarryville, PA.

On December 21, 2020, BREHENY invited Rhodes to a leadership meeting of “multiple patriot groups” from the Mid-Atlantic states that was to take place in Quarryville, Pennsylvania on January 3, 2021. BREHENY forwarded Stewart Rhodes a message describing the purpose of the meeting, which was to prepare for a January 6 rally in Washington, DC. The message stated, “This will be the day we get our comms on point with multiple other patriot groups, share rally points etc. This one is important and I believe this is our last chance to organize before the show. This meeting will be for leaders only.” In inviting Rhodes to this meeting, BREHENY cautioned, “No cell phones. Need to be Faraday bag prior to site.”

Here’s Lancaster Online’s story on the meeting (which some participants disputed was focused exclusively on January 6):

On this particular Sunday afternoon – Jan. 3, 2021 – the topic was darker and much more urgent.

Members of so-called “patriot” and militia groups from across Pennsylvania and New Jersey strategized about how they would communicate with each other in the event of a major catastrophe. The failure of the electrical grid. An epic natural disaster. An armed clash with their own government.

Many in the room believed the collapse of American society was “inevitable,” that the American political process was broken.

Though Breheny was always treated as part of the Oath Keeper prosecution, he was never joined to one of the existing conspiracies. Instead, his case just kept getting continued every two

months. Until, on June 6 – after almost all of the Oath Keepers were convicted and sentenced – Breheny pled guilty to one count of obstruction as part of a cooperation agreement.

There was no one obvious, at that point, to cooperate against.

And today, Judge Mehta set Breheny's sentencing for February 23, not long after the other cooperating Oath Keepers, who'll be sentenced in December and January.

There are a few other sleeper plea agreements I have watched. But these are nevertheless two of the most bewildering plea agreements of the twenty or so we've seen so far.

And both of them have a tie to the Lancaster, PA area.

Update: Added the piece on the January 3 meeting.