Problem Solver: Police cite 3 officers over fake tickets; man vindicated

Orland Park man's complaint: Cops wrote a pile of bogus citations

Jon Yates’ "What's Your Problem?"
November 7, 2011

For years, Mark Geinosky has steadfastly maintained that the mountain of parking tickets that arrived in his mailbox were bogus.

Turns out, the Chicago Police Department agrees.

More than two years after the Problem Solver first wrote about Geinosky's case, Superintendent Garry McCarthy has moved to fire three police officers for allegedly issuing the Orland Park resident false tickets.

Officers Steven Sabatino, Horst Hegewald and Paul Roque have been suspended without pay pending a hearing before the Police Board, which will determine if they should be terminated.

Geinosky, who received some of the tickets even after he sold his SUV, said Friday he was shocked by the news.

"Wow," he said. "It appears as if this administration — the city and the Police Department — aren't going to try to cover up corruption like the last administration did."

McCarthy also recommended a fourth officer, William Whelehan, be fired in connection with the parking ticket case. Sources say Whelehan was terminated last week for an off-duty altercation unrelated to Geinosky's case.

The internal charges against the officers were filed with the Police Board on Sept. 26.

Attorney Daniel Herbert, who represents Roque and Hegewald, said his clients deny the allegations.

"They're completely innocent of the charges," Herbert said. "The tickets were not written by them."

Sources said Sabatino is currently serving with the military overseas.

In a Friday email to the Problem Solver, Whelehan said he has fully complied with the Police Department in its investigation, which he called "misdirected and partial."
"I want to be clear that I have never met Mark Geinosky, nor have I ever issued any parking tickets to Mark Geinosky's vehicle(s)," Whelehan wrote. "In fact, after learning details of his complaint, I too, am sympathetic to his frustrations."

For Geinosky it has certainly been a frustrating journey.

He began receiving the parking tickets in late 2007. Over the next 14 months, he accumulated 24 citations, all for infractions such as parking too close to a fire hydrant, obstructing the roadway or parking in a crosswalk.

Geinosky swore he had never been to the locations cited on the tickets, which were often desolate stretches of the South Side where legal parking was readily available.

None of the tickets was attached to his car. He found out about each when notifications arrived in the mail, sometimes in batches of three.

He fought all 24 tickets in administrative court and was able to get each one thrown out.

Despite his repeated victories in court, the tickets kept coming.

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