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# Chaska, police officers named in lawsuit

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By Mark W. Olson

Former Chaska resident Edwin Perkins is suing the city of Chaska and three Chaska police officers in federal court, alleging that officers used excessive force against him in 2003.

The officers named as defendants were Josh Lawrenz, Jamie Personius and Joe Carlson.

Police Chief Scott Knight learned of the suit Friday morning, following a call from a daily newspaper reporter. Knight hadn't seen the suit as of Friday afternoon.

"I'm confident in the way the officers handled the incident and I remain confident in their abilities. They're good officers," Knight said.

The case dates back to Nov. 28, 2003, when Perkins' youngest daughter was pulled over by police. Perkins drove to the Chaska scene after learning she needed an insurance card.

He was asked to move his van across the street. He completed half a U-turn when police approached the van and ordered him out, according to the suit.

A physical altercation ensued. Perkins was restrained by police, who used a taser gun on him, according to the suit.

He was arrested and charged with six counts, including assault and obstruction of the legal process. All these charges were later dropped and, in July 2005, Perkins entered an Alford plea to disorderly conduct. (The Alford plea does not admit guilt, only that there could be enough evidence to convict a suspect.)

The federal suit alleges that officers "prepared false police reports, failed to investigate properly at the scene ... and initiated a criminal prosecution against Perkins."

Jill Clark, a Golden Valley attorney, and Jill Waite, a Minneapolis attorney, are representing Perkins in the suit. Clark defended Perkins in the Carver County District Court Case.

Clark said Perkins is on a disability retirement as a Chicago firefighter. His family has since moved from Chaska.

In the federal filing, Perkins alleges "he was tased at least 16 times by Chaska Police, then incarcerated for days without necessary medical attention."

The complaint asks for a judgment "in a reasonable amount in excess of \$50,000, and including, but not limited to, compensatory, presumed and punitive damages."

The original case led the Minneapolis organization "Communities United Against Police Brutality" to charge Chaska police officers with racial profiling and brutality. Perkins is African American. The group then held a protest in City Square Park, along Highway 41.

At the time, Chief Knight said, "Their assertion that this man was a victim of profiling, then brutalized are absolutely false," adding, "No one bothered to get their facts before they made these charges."

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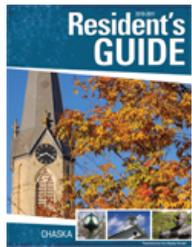
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