

[https://www.republicaneagle.com/news/public\\_safety/st-paul-park-police-cleared-of-fault-in-murders/article\\_c3bd8d2f-c25d-51f5-9be7-861c80bbeb70.html](https://www.republicaneagle.com/news/public_safety/st-paul-park-police-cleared-of-fault-in-murders/article_c3bd8d2f-c25d-51f5-9be7-861c80bbeb70.html)

**NEWS / PUBLIC SAFETY**

## **St. Paul Park police cleared of fault in murders**

Scott Wentz

Published on Jun 9, 2011

---

A federal judge ruled that the St. Paul Park Police Department and one of its officers are not at fault in connection with a 2006 double murder.

The department and officer Jesse Zilge were dismissed from a case involving a home-security firm and the family of Teri L. Lee, who with her boyfriend Timothy Hawkinson Sr., was murdered by Lee's ex-boyfriend Steven Van Keuren in her West Lakeland Township home.

In the civil litigation involving ADT Security Services and Lee's sister, the security firm sought to have St. Paul Park police and the Washington County Sheriff's Office found at fault because they failed to arrest Van Keuren in the days prior to the murders.

Among ADT's claims were that Zilge's failure to arrest Van Keuren for violating a no-contact order constituted negligence and that an officer was obligated under law to make an arrest rather than issue a citation for that offense.

U.S. District Judge John Tunheim late last month ruled against ADT in that part of the civil case, clearing St. Paul Park police of fault. The sheriff's office was cleared of fault in a March ruling.

According to police and court records, Van Keuren was charged with assaulting Lee, in her home July 29, 2006. He was released from Washington County Jail with conditions, including that he have no contact with Lee or her children.

Almost two months after his arrest, Van Keuren appeared at Oltman Middle School in St. Paul Park on Sept. 20, 2006, where Lee's daughter was playing volleyball. School staff were informed of his presence, apparently in violation of the no-contact order, and called

police. Van Keuren had left the school by the time Zilge arrived on scene.

Zilge interviewed Lee and her daughter and confirmed the no-contact order, but did not arrest Van Keuren because he did not know where the man went after leaving the school.

Van Keuren lived in River Falls, Wis., but Zilge did not believe he had authority to request that Wisconsin police arrest him. According to court records, Zilge said that in that situation the department's policy is to issue a citation for violating the no-contact order, a process he had used in other cases.

Zilge was advised by the Washington County Attorney's Office to issue a misdemeanor citation and to seek a warrant for Van Keuren's arrest. Zilge prepared the citation that day but waited to mail it so that he could review the completed police report for accuracy. Zilge was then off work for four days. He returned for his regular shift on Sept. 25, three days after Van Keuren killed Lee and her Hawkinson after breaking into the home.

In his May 23 ruling, Tunheim concluded that Zilge "simply unable to fulfill the domestic abuse statutes' mandate" because Van Keuren's whereabouts were not known. He said the question before the court was whether Zilge's actions were discretionary and protected by official immunity.

"Unable to physically arrest Van Keuren, (Zilge) was compelled to exercise discretion in apprehending Van Keuren as best he could," the judge wrote. "As such, he is entitled to official immunity."

St. Paul Park Police Chief Mike Monahan said last week that his department was criticized after the incident, and he was glad the court looked at the facts.

"It's a tragic event, but we followed the law and the rules of criminal procedure," Monahan said.