

# Officer suspended in melee

## Bond vote sign led to incident

By SANDY DAVIS AND KIMBERLY VETTER

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An off-duty Baton Rouge police officer was suspended after he got into a fight with a downtown restaurant manager early Thursday morning over a bond election sign.

Robert Moruzzi, 34, who has been with the Baton Rouge Police Department for about 19 months, tried to pull a gun from the waistband of his pants during the fight, according to a police report.

Moruzzi was placed on paid administrative leave pending an internal affairs and a criminal investigation into the incident, said Sgt. Don Kelly, a police spokesman.

The incident happened outside of The Roux House, 143 Third St., about 2 a.m. Thursday when Moruzzi allegedly tried to take down a campaign sign supporting Mayor-President Kip Holden's proposed \$901 million bond issue, Kelly said.

The sign said "Vote Yes" for the bond issue, Kelly said.

Apparently, the manager of the restaurant, whose name was not available Friday, saw Moruzzi taking down the sign and told him to stop, according to a police report. Moruzzi was not in uniform.

When Moruzzi continued to tear down the sign, the manager pushed Moruzzi away from the fence where the sign was posted, the report says.

According to the report, Moruzzi fell and when he got up, he punched the manager and threatened to kill him.

The manager told police Moruzzi punched him about five times. Police said in the report that the manager's face was bruised.

The manager told police that he did punch Moruzzi one time and when he did, Moruzzi reached into the waistband of his jeans and removed a handgun, the report says.

As he reached for the gun, witnesses said it was then that Moruzzi identified himself as a police officer, the report says.

As Moruzzi was pulling out his gun, his friend, identified in the report as J. Belcher, "intervened and tried to take the gun away from the subject," the report says.

As Belcher reached for the gun, it fell to the ground and was picked up by a woman who was watching the exchange, according to the report.

Kelly said police were called to the scene but no one was arrested. Investigations are continuing, the report says.

Two witnesses and the manager were taken to the 2nd District police station where they gave statements to police. But it was unclear in the report whether Moruzzi provided a statement.

Kelly said he did not know if the weapon involved was the officer's law enforcement issued weapon.

Kelly added police officers are required to carry their weapons when they are off duty and inside the city limits except for certain exceptions.

Moruzzi was hired in 2008 and is assigned to uniform patrol, 2nd District, Kelly said.