

# BR officer fired after fight inquiry

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A Baton Rouge police officer who fought with a downtown restaurant manager over a bond election sign while off duty was fired last week, a police spokesman said Friday.

Police Chief Jeff LeDuff terminated the officer, Robert Moruzzi, 34, on March 12 for conduct unbecoming an officer, Sgt. Don Kelly said.

The incident occurred about 2 a.m. Nov. 12, when Moruzzi tried to pull a gun from the waistband of his pants during a fight with a manager of The Roux House, 143 Third St., a police report says.

The fight began after Moruzzi, who was not in uniform, allegedly tried to take down a campaign sign supporting Mayor-President Kip Holden's proposed \$901 million bond issue, Kelly has said.

The manager of the restaurant, whose name was not listed on the police report, saw Moruzzi taking down the sign and told him to stop.

The report gives this account of the incident:

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

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, bruising his face.

The manager told police he punched Moruzzi once and when he did, Moruzzi reached into the waistband of his jeans and removed a handgun.

As he reached for the gun, witnesses said, Moruzzi identified himself as a police officer.

A friend identified in the report as J. Belcher "intervened and tried to take the gun away from the subject."

When Belcher reached for the gun, it fell and was picked up by a woman who was watching the exchange.

Kelly has said police were called to the scene but no one was arrested.

Moruzzi was placed on paid administrative leave pending internal affairs and criminal investigations.

The criminal investigation resulted in a misdemeanor summons issued Dec. 4 for attempted misdemeanor theft, simple assault, aggravated assault, simple battery and disturbing the peace by public intoxication, Kelly has said.

The Internal Affairs investigation resulted in Moruzzi's termination, which was the only disciplinary action taken against the former officer during his 21-month career with the Police Department.

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

Prior to joining the Police Department, Moruzzi was an officer with the state Department of Public Safety, State Police spokesman Sgt. Markus Smith has said. Moruzzi has no disciplinary record with the agency.

Moruzzi has 15 days from the day he was fired to file an appeal with the Municipal Fire and Police Civil Service Board. As of Friday, Moruzzi had not filed an appeal.

