

PRESS RELEASE

CITY OF DEWITT

September 22, 2023

On September 14, 2023, former City of DeWitt police officer Chad Vorce pled no contest to two misdemeanor offenses – Willful Neglect of Duty and Aggravated Assault - stemming from an off-duty incident on January 14, 2021. Mr. Vorce twice drew his firearm while off duty (and outside of his jurisdiction) after approaching a van he described as driving erratically in his neighborhood. The driver of the van was a new employee of the Lansing State Journal delivering newspapers.

The City of DeWitt would like to acknowledge and thank the Michigan Attorney General, Ms. Dana Nessel, and her team for their work in prosecuting this case. Mr. Vorce was originally charged with three felonies by the AG's office. We appreciate that the justice system has prevailed and the plea agreement included the surrender of Mr. Vorce's MCOLES certification, ensuring that he will never again be a police officer in the State of Michigan. From the very beginning, the City of DeWitt felt strongly that Mr. Vorce's conduct was criminal, egregious and unbecoming of a law enforcement officer, on or off duty.

Immediately following the incident, the City of DeWitt put Officer Vorce on Administrative Leave. After a thorough review of the evidence, including video tape from the scene and Michigan State police body cameras, and an investigation by the MSP, the City of DeWitt terminated Mr. Vorce. However, as a result of a subsequent arbitration decision, The City was forced to reinstate Mr. Vorce. As stated in the arbitration decision, the facts of this case were never in dispute. The conclusion of the criminal case last week before the Honorable Judge Cori E. Barkman in the Clinton County Circuit Court validates that the City of DeWitt was on the correct side of this incident from the very beginning, and shines a light on the inadequacies and injustice of Michigan's mandatory arbitration law.

This outdated and misdirected law has not only cost the City of DeWitt and many Michigan municipalities legal fees and wasted time, but is an injustice to the citizens of the state. The legislature needs to examine and reform this law to require cases to be heard by an elected judge who is accountable to the people, and provide for appeals process in circuit court. There is certainly a place for arbitration, especially when a conflict involves public servants and the need to maintain public safety, such as a possible strike by a police force. However, this case illustrates the inappropriate application of the law when used to protect an individual who violates the public trust and prevents a municipality from taking personnel actions necessary to maintain a police force that respects every individual's civil rights.