

Friendly competition turns into decades-long career

City welcomes new officer

By Laurel Kraus
Staff Writer

CITY OF GROSSE POINTE — The newest public safety officer in the City of Grosse Pointe comes with a nearly 25-year background in law enforcement, but initially wound up in the field somewhat unintentionally.

Steve Mukavec, sworn in Monday, Oct. 25, was interested in going into

engineering or psychology as a young adult and only applied for a job with the Detroit Police Department because a friend did not want to do it by himself. “At first it’s kind of like a competition between me and him to see who could get in first,” Mukavec said, “and then it became, as I was going through the process, like, ‘I really like this.’”

Following five and a



half years with the DPD, he began a 19-year career

with the Harper Woods Police Department. There, he formed family-like bonds with fellow officers, served on the honor guard team, conducted thousands of arrests for a wide variety of crimes and was coordinator of the field training program and a patrol sergeant when he left. “You name it, I’ve seen it and done it and arrested for it, unfortunately,” he said. Mukavec contemplated leaving the Harper Woods department for two years, waiting for the right place to open up,



COURTESY PHOTOS

Left, Public Safety Officer Steve Mukavec’s wife, Flora, pins his badge. Above, City Clerk Julie Arthurs swears him in Monday, Oct. 25.



Mukavec’s family attended the ceremony to show their support. Pictured from left are his mother, Rose Trotto; daughters, Gabrielle and Isabella; and wife, Flora.

before his friend, Grosse Pointe Park Public Safety Officer Matt Reyes, told him about the City of Grosse Pointe department. “He’s like, ‘I think you’d be a perfect fit there. The guys are really good guys and I know the type of person you are,’” Mukavec said. “... So I decided to do it and I absolutely think it is the right fit.” With more than two decades in law enforcement, Mukavec hopes he can add to the Grosse

Pointe department with his experience. “I’m very appreciative of the opportunity,” he said. “By no means did I go in thinking that I was a shoo-in. I was just very appreciative of everybody that gave me the opportunity to be there and hopefully I can come in and help out and be an asset to the community.” Although Mukavec’s friend didn’t initially make it into the DPD, he now works for the Dearborn Police Department.

Lawsuit alleges mishandling of scam on elderly Pointe residents

By Laurel Kraus
Staff Writer

CITY OF GROSSE POINTE — Following a July scam that cost an elderly Grosse Pointe couple \$92,600 — a majority of their life savings — a complaint was filed in Wayne County Circuit Court in mid-October against Comerica Bank.

Attorneys for the couple allege the bank chain failed in its role as a fiduciary by not canceling the transaction when there was plenty of time to do so, not flagging the situation as a possible scam despite a variety of warning signs and then immediately attempting to avoid any liability.

The timeline

While on the Costco website Monday, July 26, a warning claiming illegal access to her account came across the screen of a Grosse Pointe woman

in her 70s and directed her to call the Comerica Bank fraud department. “She had attempted to access their account, like she always does and has for years, by putting in the password and her access was denied,” explained John Urso, an attorney for the couple, “which further led her to believe there may be something legitimate going on here.” When she called the number claiming to be Comerica’s fraud department, the woman was connected with a man identifying himself as Comerica employee Sam Peterson, who said they were investigating the possibility of inside unauthorized access to her savings account. Claiming an employee at Comerica could be involved, the woman was directed to go to a branch where she does not normally bank and transfer

her funds to an account set up for her at Evolve Bank & Trust. While this is a legitimate banking institution, Urso explained, the routing and account numbers provided by “Peterson” were not registered with Evolve Bank & Trust, but instead were international. “As she’s leaving the bank driving back home, Mr. Peterson calls and inquires, ‘Have you completed this transfer?’” Urso explained. “And that’s when my client’s wife became suspicious. ... She called (her local) branch and said, ‘Do you have a Mr. Sam Peterson working in your fraud department?’ She was told no.” With the transfer entered at 4:30 p.m., the woman requested the transfer be stopped by 4:45 p.m. From that point July 26, through Friday, July 30,

the transaction appeared to be pending, with the money remaining in the couple’s account. Early afternoon July 30, the couple was called and advised the money had been transferred. **The allegations** Though a participant without having initiated the scam, said Mark Rossman, partner with Rossman, P.C. and co-counsel on the lawsuit, Comerica was in a position where it could have prevented the loss. “It was and should have been possible to reverse that transaction while it was pending,” Rossman said. “... In addition to that, and really perhaps more importantly than what the bank failed to do in order to correct the transaction when (it was requested), was what the bank failed to do at the counter.”

Various red flags any banking institution should be knowledgeable in, he said, included an elderly woman asking to transfer a substantial portion of her account to an outside account with international routing and account numbers, with no prior notice and without the co-signer on the account, her husband, present or even contacted. Adding insult to injury, Comerica sent the couple an indemnification agreement once the transaction completed. “That email said, ‘We are asking you to sign a release and indemnification agreement, basically holding Comerica and Evolve Bank harmless before we can tell you whether there’s any money remaining to be refunded to you,’” Urso explained, “which I find so remarkably awful.” Attorneys for the cou-

ple are seeking \$277,800 in treble damages — or three times the amount lost — along with plaintiff’s costs and attorney fees. “It’s one thing if she effectuated this transfer from the comfort of her own home and everybody was none the wiser until the money was gone,” Rossman said. “This actually went through two levels of command at the Grosse Pointe Woods branch from Comerica on Mack Avenue. ... It pended for four days and then it released on the last day and it was gone.” A Comerica Inc. representative declined to comment, citing customer privacy. “We tried to reach out and resolve this matter without having to file a lawsuit, but to no avail,” Rossman said. “They indicated they wouldn’t even negotiate with us.”

Treats in The Village

The City of Grosse Pointe hosted its annual Trick or Treat in The Village on Friday, Oct. 29. Despite the rain, lots of trick-or-treaters came out to walk along Kercheval for candy. Hugo, dressed as a lion, was a big hit with trick-or-treaters.



PHOTOS BY RENEE LANDUYT

Joe Bonanni, owner of Beyond Juicery + Eatery, and Sara Martin of Speech with Sara handed out candy in front of their businesses. Check out more photos online at grossepointenews.com.



Sam Conn dressed as the Reaper, Lucy Conn dressed as a skeleton and Lily Conn dressed as a taco.

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