

Five days on the job, then gone

Police departments 'pickpocketing' officers from others on uptick

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BURLINGTON — A police officer hired by the City of Burlington has resigned from his \$55,000-a-year position just five days after taking the oath of office. And no one seems to know why. But it could be an example of what one official calls "pickpocketing," which occurs when a police department hires away another department's newest officers as

soon as they are trained and ready to hit the streets.

Trenton Sobczak, a U.S. Marine from nearby Waukesha County, was sworn into office in Burlington on Aug. 17 during a ceremony in front of the Burlington City Council.

He resigned five days later after handling just 18 police calls for traffic crashes, an animal bite and other routine incidents.

Burlington city officials say that Sobczak offered no reason or explanation for quitting the police department.

Officials estimate that Burlington taxpayers invested \$16,500 in Sobczak, starting when he was



Sobczak

hired as a recruit in May and continuing through three months of training and preparation for active duty. "Trenton Sobczak did not submit a letter of resignation or e-mail or anything similar which indicated the reason for his departure," Police Chief Mark Anderson said in an email. Sobczak could not be reached for comment.

Police officials say it is not uncommon for new recruits to leave a department abruptly. Sometimes

it is because they have a change of heart about the work. Other times, it is because they have accepted a position with another department offering higher pay.

Some competing departments "raid" their neighboring police forces because it saves them the time and expense involved in training their own new recruits.

James Palmer, executive director of the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, said some cities have taken steps to protect themselves by imposing pre-employment agreements. If a new officer leaves the force before serving at least one year, the officer must repay the city part of

his or her training expenses.

Palmer referred to the practice of raiding another department's new recruits as "pickpocketing."

"It is a legitimate concern," he said. "I don't think it's common, but I think it's becoming more common."

Burlington city officials said they are unsure whether Sobczak quit so he could jump to another department.

Losing an officer after less than one full week of active duty is not something many departments have experienced.

Donald Gaglione, police chief

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Racine-native Michael Rupnow has appeared in a series of well-known TV series and now had a featured role in the 2020 film "The Fox Hunter." Clockwise from top-left are stills from: NCIS, Chance, Modern Family, The Fox Hunter.

'Keep my nose to the grind'

Racine native makes advancements in TV, movie industry

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Racine native Michael Rupnow's first job in middle school was newspaper delivery for The Journal Times.

Flash forward several decades, he's now an actor and producer living in California.

Rupnow has appeared on award-winning network shows including "How I Met Your Mother," "Bones," "NCIS" and "Modern Family." He's mainly played supporting roles and one- or two-episode characters but has played some larger and lead roles in the film "The Fox Hunter" and TV movies "Sisters of the Groom" and "The Confession." His IMDb page boasts more than 30 credits.

"The Fox Hunter," which was released in 2020 and is about



INDICAN PICTURES

Racine native Michael Rupnow, far left at back, stars as womanizer Whitman in the film, "The Fox Hunter," which was released in 2020.

a Southern family that deteriorates when the grandmother dies, starred Rupnow as a womanizer character named Whitman. Whitman doesn't appear until more than halfway through the film but is one of the main

characters and helps climax the plot.

Out of Rupnow's recent filmography, that was the role he was able to sink his teeth in the most, he said.

"I definitely am proud of that,"

he said. "The film is quirky, and artistically speaking it was very fun. The director had a specific ask for it."

Director Patrick Shanahan said Rupnow surprised him more than any of the others on the cast list. He spoke of Rupnow's energy and ability to push people.

"I knew what the other actors were bringing to the table," Shanahan said. "But Rupnow brought such high energy and brought a new spirit for the character."

Rupnow often challenged him, Shanahan said, fighting back in a playful, respectful way of the manner the character should be portrayed, and Shanahan learned a lot from Rupnow.

"He challenged me more than I was willing to challenge myself," he said. "The Whitman character really shines."

Rupnow noted his recent TV roles were all really fun, but primetime shows such as

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GATEWAY STUDENT

Bahr named to state tech college board

FOR THE JOURNAL TIMES

RACINE — Gateway Technical College student Megan Bahr has been appointed to a two-year term as the student member of the Wisconsin Technical College System Board, the governing body which oversees such decisions as systemwide tuition setting, program approval, facilities approval and state finance.

Bahr's first meeting in her new role was last week at Madison Area Technical College.

"Megan is a fantastic representative for our nearly 300,000 technical college students statewide," said WTCS President Morna K. Foy. "We were fortunate to get to know her as a WTCS Ambassador and have no doubt that her leadership skills will be a great fit with the board."

Bahr was selected as the Gateway District Ambassador for the 2020-21 Academic Year, serving as the student body voice to communities throughout the college's district, as well as speaking engagements for college events held throughout the year. She also served as the student member on the Gateway Board of Trustees.

"I'm honored to be named to the WTCS board," said Bahr. "I was able to represent Gateway students when I was on the Gateway Board of Trustees, and now I'll be able to represent all 300,000 students in the system on the state board."

"I am incredibly proud to be able to serve them and will do so as if we went to the same college and worked next to each other in class. I'm excited for the opportunity."

To date, Bahr is the first district

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Bahr

HALO

Shelter looking for new director again

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RACINE — The county's primary homeless shelter is in search of a new executive director again.

In December 2019, HALO Inc., 2000 De Koven Ave., announced that its finance director, Nina Thilleman, would be taking over the shelter's top job in the coming months. But she has since stepped down and is no longer with the nonprofit.

Gai Lorenzen, a retired attorney who has been trying to retire from the shelter for several years, is back in her role as acting ex-



Thilleman Lorenzen

ecutive director as the search continues.

The nonprofit did not comment on why Thilleman is no longer director.

For more information on the job, go to haloinc.org/employment-opportunities.

Racine man charged with hate crime after racial slur

Made several threats to hotel manager

JOURNAL TIMES STAFF

STURTEVANT — A Racine man has been charged with a hate crime after directing racial slurs at a hotel employee.

The man, identified as Daniel Boudreau, 66, allegedly refused to check out of his hotel room on Wednesday at Excel Inn, 1033 S. East Frontage Road, and had also both urinated and defecated around the room.

When officers from the Mount Pleasant Police Depart-



Boudreau

ment arrived, they reported Boudreau "appeared extremely intoxicated" and was drinking vodka from a plastic cup despite being ordered to stop drinking. An officer reported that officers ended up taking the vodka from him and pouring it out.

According to a criminal complaint, Boudreau "made several threats to (a manager of the hotel), calling him racial slurs ... while causing a loud

disturbance at the hotel. Officers attempted to transport the defendant to Motel 94, but he was denied a room due to his past conduct at Motel 94. The defendant continued to scream and yell at Officers in the parking lot of Motel 94, and acted disorderly upon arrival at the jail as well."

Boudreau was one of the final residents at the Riverside Inn before it closed in summer 2019 and was transferred into Travelodge Waters Edge Hotel.

On Thursday, Boudreau was charged with misdemeanor disorderly conduct with a hate crime modifier.

Man tried to ‘prove he didn’t sexually assault a boy’ by showing his privates

JOURNAL TIMES STAFF

TOWN OF NORWAY — A Burlington man allegedly tried to “prove he didn’t sexually assault a boy” by showing a bartender his privates.

David F. Roucek, 70, of the 400 block of North Front Street, was charged with a felony count of false imprisonment and misdemeanor counts of lewd and lascivious behavior and disorderly conduct.

According to a criminal complaint:

On Wednesday, an officer was sent to a residence on Wind Lake Road in reference to an assault that occurred at Cooler



Roucek

who said she bartends at the tavern and was working when Roucek was telling her about how he “did not sexually assault a boy years ago,” and wanted to show her his privates as if to prove that. She told him to stop and then went to clean the bathroom.

While she was cleaning the bathroom, Roucek

by the Lake Tavern at 24709 W. Loomis Road.

Upon arrival, the officer met with a woman who said she bartends at the tavern and was working when Roucek was telling her about how he “did not sexually assault a boy years ago,” and wanted to show her his privates as if to prove that. She told him to stop and then went to clean the bathroom.

Roucek was given a \$1,000 signature bond in Racine County Circuit Court on Friday. A preliminary hearing is set for Sept. 30 at the Racine County Law Enforcement Center, 717 Wisconsin Ave., online court records show.

Man accused of robbing Pilot Truck Stop and Speedway

Robbed them on the same night

JOURNAL TIMES STAFF

CALEDONIA — A Milwaukee man has been accused of robbing a Pilot Truck Stop and Speedway on the same night.

Norman A. Danowski, 33, was charged with two felony counts of armed robbery with threat of force.

According to a criminal complaint:

On Thursday, an officer was sent to the Pilot Truck Stop at 13712 Northwestern Ave. for a robbery. It was advised a man, later identified as Danowski, threat-

ened to use a knife on the cashier and was seen leaving on a bike.

The cashier said that he approached her and pointed the knife at her while telling her to open the register. He told her to get a bag and put money in it but she fled the store instead. The shift manager saw Danowski leaving east on a bike. It was determined that \$1,015.06 had been stolen.

At 2:20 a.m., officers responded to the area of Speedway at 4960 Douglas Ave. for an armed robbery. An employee said that he was speaking to another customer when Danowski entered and grabbed a

doughnut. The employee asked him which register he would help him at, and then Danowski demanded he empty the cash register. He was displaying a knife and pointed it towards him.

A traffic stop was conducted on a car that was driven by Danowski and several items were recovered from the car including over \$2,000 in cash.

Danowski was given a \$50,000 cash bond in Racine County Circuit Court on Thursday. A preliminary hearing is set for Sept. 23 at the Racine County Law Enforcement Center, 717 Wisconsin Ave., online court records show.

Bahr

From A13

ambassador to also be appointed to the WTCS board.

“The entire Gateway community congratulates Megan on her appointment to the Wisconsin Technical College State Board,” said Gateway Technical College President and CEO

Bryan Albrecht. “It is a tribute to her excellent academic achievements and commitment to creating an inclusive and meaningful college experience for all Wisconsin students.”

Ten of the 13 WTCS board members are appointed by the governor, including Bahr. The remaining board members serve because of the statewide positions

they hold.

Bahr also was named to the Campus Compact 2020-21 cohort of Newman Civic Fellows. Students selected for the fellowship are leaders on their campuses who demonstrate a commitment to finding solutions for challenges facing communities locally, nationally and internationally.



INDICAN PICTURES

Racine native Michael Rupnow is pictured with a gun in hand as he stars as Whitman in the film, “The Fox Hunter,” released in 2020.

Rupnow

From A13

“Modern Family,” “Bones,” “Chance” and “NCIS” are all well-established programs that he was honored to be a part of, even if his roles may have been small. The roles varied in content and the amount of dialogue Rupnow had.

“NCIS” was the biggest of those three.

He said despite that, he’s proud of having all those roles and they’re all on the same level in his heart. He appreciated working with seasoned actors and directors.

“I can’t rank any of those because they all were such an honor to be a part of,” Rupnow said.

A ‘log run’ career

Rupnow, 40, grew up in Racine and graduated Park High School in 1999. He makes it back to Racine to visit family for holidays, summer trips and family events. His parents, sister and brother and their families all still live in the area. They, along with other members of his family including his wife, are the reason he feels supported in his career.

“I couldn’t do it without their support. It’s a challenging gig,” he said.

Hollywood outside of Hollywood

He lives in Los Angeles with his wife Amy and his son Bodhi, who was born July 2020. The couple plans to stay in LA, or at least live there part time, and part time somewhere else. The pandemic has changed the audition process; actors can submit pre-recorded clips for consideration.

“Only a few call backs are in person, but not all call backs,” he said. “That frees up industry members to not be tied to LA.”

Rupnow, who works as a fitness coach and manager for Orangetheory Fitness as his day job, is additionally writing some independent projects of his own. While still regularly seeking audition opportunities, over the past five years he’s written



ABC

Racine native Michael Rupnow, right, is pictured playing his character Eddie on the TV series “Modern Family” in 2014. He appeared in two episodes, “The Wedding, Part 1” and “The Wedding, Part 2.”



CBS

Racine native Michael Rupnow was featured as Parker James in the TV series “NCIS” in the episode “Misconduct” which aired in 2021.

a few feature-length scripts and is currently revising a pilot episode for a historical project.

“Artistically, I want to continue to be blessed with opportunities to dig into roles that are layered and offer a different perspective to the human condition that I’m not present to,” he said. “Professionally, I would love to be able to have a production company sometime, strictly producing or have a career that shares with acting, writing, directing and producing, and gain experience in all four of those avenues.”

As far as current projects, Rupnow isn’t shooting anything currently, but he’s in the pre-production stages with a film he wrote with a friend via FaceTime. They’re going to be shooting it in the next few weeks.

As his network grows, he is beginning to work with some of the same people. His director, Tawnia McKiernan, was the same for both TV series “NCIS” and “Devious Maids.” He said it was fun to reconnect and share previous memories

with McKiernan. “Being here in LA, the more talent you put in, you start to cross paths with the same people,” Rupnow said. “The worlds start to intertwine.”

In the acting industry, it can be hard to maintain motivation after being rejected as a candidate for a role. Rupnow said acting is a “log run” and times can be tough.

“I’m just going to keep my nose to the grind and keep pushing forward,” Rupnow said. “At this point, having done it for a while, I know there’s going to be a lot of swings and misses. But once the right opportunity comes along, I can be grateful for it.”

Shanahan said Rupnow is the kind of person that he “needs to write something” for. The two have stayed in touch and Shanahan said he knows they’ll work together again someday.

“He was really one that shone through pretty dramatically,” Shanahan said. “After day two (on set), I was like ‘oh my god, he’s incredible.’”

Quit

From A13

in the Waukesha County village of Big Bend, said the fastest resignation he could recall seeing in his department was five months after a new officer had started work.

“You just lose them,” Gaglione said. “It’s unfortunately a fact of life.”

Sobczak once lived in Big Bend, and he applied for a position with the Big Bend Police Department in November 2019. He was turned down because he had not yet completed police academy college training.

According to his job application, the 2010 graduate of Muskego High School spent four years in the U.S. Marines and then enrolled at Milwaukee Area Techni-

cal College.

MATC records show that Sobczak earned an associate degree in criminal justice in 2017 and completed police academy training in June 2020.

He also made a brief foray into local politics in 2018 when he ran for a seat on the Big Bend Village Board. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that Sobczak declared himself a candidate in a recall election targeting an incumbent village trustee who had angered some voters by suggesting that the village could save money by contracting with an outside fire department. Sobczak lost the election after getting about 40 percent of the votes. Village leaders said they have not heard from him since.

Earlier this year, Sobczak applied to join Burlington’s 22-person police depart-

ment. He was hired May 2 as a recruit at a salary of \$28 an hour, or \$55,888 a year.

After the department trained him — including field training with other officers — he took the oath of office and became a police officer Aug. 17.

Anderson said there was nothing unusual about the 18 calls that Sobczak answered for traffic incidents, a dispute at a retail store, a false alarm for a fire and a reckless driving incident. Whether Sobczak experienced something on the streets that prompted him to quit remains a mystery.

“Nothing from that week stands out to me as unusual, but please understand I was not on the road with him,” Anderson said. “It is his perspective that would matter, and I cannot speak for him.”

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NEW LISTING

Open Today 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM
1015 Ohio St., Racine

- 3 BD, 1.5 BA, Brick Ranch w/ 2.5 detached car garage.
- Large living room, eat-in kitchen & bedrooms have original hardwood flooring.
- Lower level offers large finished rec room w/1/2 bath, large laundry room & a huge storage room that could be divided off into 1 or 2 separate rooms.

MLS#1762955 **\$225,000**

NEW LISTING

1700 Green St., Racine

- 5 BD, 1 BA, Two story Victorian/Federal home.
- First floor laundry
- Maintenance free exterior, and off street parking with fenced yard.

MLS#1763850 **\$129,900**

ACCEPTED OFFER

1215 North St., Racine

- 3 BD, 2 BA, Ranch home w/1.5 car garage w/fenced in yard.
- Large living room with hardwood floors, eat-in kitchen with all the appliances included, beautiful cabinets & counter tops.
- Lower level will be a surprise with the large family room, bar area with storage & a beautiful full bath with tiled walk in shower & an EGRESS window for additional expansion.

MLS#1763375 **\$169,000**

ACCEPTED OFFER

5249 Willowview Rd. Caledonia

- 4 BR, 2.5 BA, Two story Colonial
- Greet your guests in the generous foyer open to an expansive living room. The large kitchen is flanked by formal dining & dinette area. The family room features a FP & built-in wet bar perfect for Football Sunday.
- LL features a nice size rec. rm. that could easily accommodate exercise, gaming or theatre.

MLS#1758830 **\$375,000**

ACCEPTED OFFER

4233 Danbury Ln., Mount Pleasant

- 3BR, 1.5 BA Ranch w/2 car garage
- Hard wood Floors in living room and bedrooms.
- Large family room off the back of the house.

MLS#1761941 **\$260,000**