



**City of East Lansing  
Independent Police Oversight Commission**

819 Abbot Road  
East Lansing, MI 48823

**Recommendation for Additional Investigation of  
Christian Wells' Complaint**

July 6, 2022

On April 19, 2022, Christian Wells filed a complaint against Officer Jordan Woodruff of the East Lansing Police Department.

The complaint involved an incident on December 18, 2021. Mr. Wells was, driving, and Officer Woodruff made an entry in a State of Michigan Traffic Crash Report that Mr. Wells claims was false.

On 27 June 2022, the Police Department submitted an investigation report to the Independent Police Oversight Commission. The Commission recommends additional investigation for the following reasons.

**Officer Woodruff's Case Report**

Officer Jordan Woodruff wrote a case report that reads in part as follows:

On the above date/time, I was dispatched to 233 Abbot Rd. at the Abbot Apartments to meet with the caller, XXXXXX [the other driver], female, DOB XXXXXXXX.

Dispatch advised XXXXXXXX was waiting in a silver Ford Escape at Albert and Evergreen.

#### Contact With XXXXXXXX

I exited my patrol vehicle and made contact with XXXXXXXX outside her vehicle. I observed minor damage to the front L of her silver SUV.

XXXXXXX stated that she was NB on Evergreen attempting to turn EB onto Albert which is currently a one-way for EB traffic only due to construction to the N. She tried to make a R EB turn and then another immediate R into the parking garage. She stated at that time there was a yellow

Mustang with the other driver ID'd as Christian Alexander Wells.

Maid Christian was exiting the parking ramp attempting to go WB on Albert which was currently a one-way for just EB. She stated that he began yelling at her at which point he continued to make the L turn into the wrong way down the one-way and struck the front L of her vehicle.

#### Contact With Christian Wells

Christian stated he was exiting the Abbot parking garage when he observed XXXXXXXX pulling in. He stated he asked her to back up so he could get out and she would not back up.

Christian stated he then disregarded her and went around her. He stated he did not believe they made contact and was unaware that there was any damage to her vehicle.

Christian stated he went out while on TX with me and looked at his vehicle and did not see any damage....

It is important to note that Officer Woodruff did not interview Mr. Wells at the scene. The interview took place "on TX", that is, over the phone. Woodruff did not see Wells' car.

## **Officer Woodruff's Crash Report**

Officer Woodruff also completed a State of Michigan Traffic Crash Report that reads in part as follows:

Unit 2 [the other driver] was traveling the EB on Albert from Evergreen, as Albert is currently a one way EB from Evergreen to Abbot. Unit 2 was attempting to pull into the Abbot parking garage when unit 1 [Mr. Wells] was pulling out of the garage. Unit 2 stated she was trying to let unit 1 know it was a one way and there was no room to get by due to the construction. Unit 1 ignored unit 2 and attempted to continue WB in the wrong direction on Albert, striking the front left of unit 2's vehicle. Unit 1 stated unit 2 was blocking the road and not moving out of his way. He stated he thought he had enough room to get by and was unaware he struck unit 2's vehicle. RO did observe a yellow paint where unit 1 struck unit 2, consistent with unit 1's yellow vehicle. I also observed silver paint on unit 1's vehicle consistent with unit 2's vehicle. Unit 1 did not believe he struck unit 2.

It is important to note that, although the crash report states that Woodruff observed paint on Wells' car, Woodruff never saw Wells' car.

## **Mr. Wells' Complaint**

Mr. Wells' complaint reads in part as follows:

In December of last year I was involved in a verbal altercation with a young driver coming out of the Abbot parking ramp, off the corner of Albert and Abbott. The driver felt I wasn't following the direction of traffic as they believed I should and proceeded to call ELPD. I drove around them and continued on my way.

After arriving home, I received a call from Officer Woodruff (Badge 186) saying that the young driver claimed I had hit their car. I expressed that I had not hit their car, there was no visible damage to my vehicle, inquired as to how the driver managed to get my license plate number in the momentary altercation, and asked if there was any evidence that I had damaged the other driver's vehicle. Officer Woodruff was evasive, claiming he had seen damage to their car but didn't have any proof, and when I pressed for more information, he was dismissive, threatened to write me a ticket for leaving the scene of the accident, and required me to give him my insurance information. I complied on the condition that he would get the security camera footage from the building before handing over my insurance information. He agreed to do so.

Four months later I received communication from my insurance saying that the other driver had filed for damages. My insurance forwarded me the police report that I had not previously been able to view. In the police report, Officer Woodruff had written the report claiming to have investigated at the scene, saying that he had seen yellow paint (my vehicle's color) on the other driver's vehicle and corresponding silver paint transfer to my vehicle. Even if he had seen yellow paint on the other driver's vehicle, he could not verify it was mine as my vehicle was not present. As well as claiming that he saw silver paint on my vehicle was a complete fabrication, as again, I was not at the scene when ELPD arrived.

By fabricating the police report without evidence or investigation, I am now liable to my insurance for the "damages" to the other driver's vehicle. I am not sure why Officer Woodruff opted to fast-track the report my lying but considering the other driver's insurance uses that report to verify payment, that could constitute insurance fraud....

## **The Police Department's Findings**

The Police Department conducted an investigation of Mr. Wells' complaint and concluded that Officer Woodruff violated two ELPD Policies and Procedures:

Order number: 4-20: Code of Conduct G. ARTICLE 7- NEGLECT OF DUTY, 1. The employee failed to perform their duties in a reasonable, proper, and thorough, and efficient manner. The employee failed to take the appropriate or required action based upon Department policies and procedures, written directives, or Department training guidelines. The employee failed to complete the required or appropriate written or computerized documentation of the incident.

Order number 34-20: Property and Evidence Management. 34.2. A. EVIDENCE: Property which can play a role in establishing or reconstructing a crime, link a suspect to the victim or crime scene, or furnish proof in legal matter. Evidence includes items which are forensic or scientific in nature. 34.4 GENERAL INFORMATION: E. Property and evidence shall be safely collected and properly packaged. Property or evidence coming into an employee's possession shall be submitted to the Quartermaster by the end of the employee's duty day. Exceptions may be authorized by the employees immediate Supervisor.

## **Deficiency in the Department's Investigation**

However, there is reason to believe that Officer Woodruff may have violated another policy that is not addressed in the investigation report.

A false statement on a State of Michigan Traffic Crash Report, is arguably a violation of the Police Department's Code of Conduct, Article 6, item F, which forbids officers to:

Knowingly and willfully make an unauthorized or false entry in any police report or any other type of department record such as, but not

limited to, a duty assignment, personnel record, payroll record, time record, job application, resume, etc.

There is reason to believe that Officer Woodruff made a false statement on the State of Michigan Traffic Crash Report when he claimed that he “observed” silver paint on Mr. Wells’ car. Woodruff said, “I also observed silver paint on unit 1’s vehicle ...” That statement was arguably false because Woodruff talked to Wells by phone only and did not have an opportunity to observe Wells’ car.

The investigation report did not discuss whether Officer Woodruff violated Police Department Code of Conduct, Article 6, item F, having made a false entry in the State of Michigan Traffic Crash Report.

### **Recommendation**

Therefore, pursuant to Ordinance 2-493(E), the commission recommends that the Police Department conduct additional investigation on the following issue: Did Officer Woodruff violate the Code of Conduct, Article 6, Item F, by making a false entry in the State of Michigan Traffic Crash Report.

East Lansing Independent Police Oversight Commission

By \_\_\_\_\_, chair