

# \$20,000 Settlement for What Looked Like Public Parking

By NEIL SCHULMAN

A woman who thought she was parking in a public lot in Asbury Park and was charged \$250 because the lot was actually private, has settled with the owner of the property for \$20,000.

Her attorney said there's even more to the case and, what he believes, more to parking problems in the city in general.

Three years ago, on Nov. 8, 2018, Michele Lanfrank went to an Asbury Park restaurant, parking in a parking lot downtown off Lake Avenue next to a sign saying "Public Parking." Lanfrank's attorney, Thomas DeSeno, said that when she came back, the car had been covered with an elec-

tronic "barnacle" blocking the windshield. Men approached her, saying she would need to pay \$225 in cash to get the device removed.

She wasn't alone. Complaints about this from others started pouring in.

"There were a great deal of people this happened to," DeSeno said.

When the city found out about this, they said the lot never had a license to operate in the first place and shut it down. And Lanfrank took the owners, parking company and towing company involved to court.

DeSeno said that during discovery, they found that across

from the lot was a large sign saying public parking. The spaces in it were numbered, just like Asbury Park's metered spaces were at the time. This gave the impression that the lot was public parking, and you needed to pay at the city's kiosk next to it.

In the back of the lot was a small sign saying that this was private property, and you needed to pay with a special app. There was no staff.

"Everybody was fooled," DeSeno said.

During discovery, they found it was being monitored with a camera. When the lot was full, a tow company would come in and barnacle windshields, to get their car

back, vehicle owners needed to pay. While there was supposedly an app to make the payment with credit cards, DeSeno said he never found a record of that working. Most people had to pay cash.

When Asbury Park discovered the lot had never filed an application to serve as a private parking area, they shut it down. A couple of dozen people had been given refunds when that happened.

DeSeno said he filed the lawsuit because he believed numerous laws and business practices were violated by the system that was being used there.

The lot was owned by Jemal Armory LLC, a company owned by developer Douglas Jemal. He and Lanfrank reached a settlement agreement for \$20,000, and the case against the company has been dismissed.

Jemal has not commented on the case.

Lanfrank wasn't suing only because she was inconvenienced, but to right a wrong, DeSeno said.

"She's also donating a portion

of the proceeds to some charities," he said.

But the case isn't over. The company operating the lot and the tow company that placed the barnacles on the cars never responded to the suit, and are in default, DeSeno said, so those parts of the case are continuing.

Nor is it the only parking lot issue in Asbury Park, according to DeSeno. He's been looking at what appears to be "parking lot poker," constantly changing rates being charged by parking lots.

He's seen lots charging as much as \$60 a day to park on weekends, which is \$10 to \$15 more than you'd pay for daily parking in New York City on average, he said.

He's filed Open Public Records Act requests to get more information on the situation. For many in the city, those rates to park near the beach for a day can be unacceptable, he said.

"In a town where still a huge portion of the population is impoverished, to charge \$60 is just reprehensible," he said.

## 23 Parole Officers Sworn In

Twenty-three new parole officer recruits were sworn in at the State Parole Board's central office in Trenton recently. The recruits were part of a larger class of newly minted investigators from law enforcement agencies throughout the state that attended the Division of Criminal Justice's (DCJ) Basic Course for Investigators.

The New Jersey State Parole Officer Recruits from Class 2021-1 are:

Amro Aly, Corey Barber, Alexander Bronico, Arthur Capone, Delia Chernes, Erin Collins, Katelyn Conrey, Megan Ezzo, Jeffrey Fajardo, Mark Hannah, Christopher Heil, Ryan Johnson, Matthew Kammerer, Danayah McCormick, Jada Nims, Daniel Patterson, Kevin Perusse, Robert Reiner-Sanabria, Louis Rocha, Matthew Rogan, Hector Tamayo, Brett Weinberg, Roxanne Winters.

The six-month basic course for investigators covers general topics such as investigative procedures, apprehension, and prosecution of criminals. Basic firearms training and physical conditioning training are also conducted during the training academy course held at the New Jersey National Guard Training Center in Sea Girt.

New Jersey State Parole Board Chairman Samuel J. Plumeri, Jr. said, "I am proud of each and

every recruit who joins the New Jersey State Parole Board because they fully undergo rigorous training that will prepare them for their important work. The recruits' exemplary commitment, fortitude, and diligence will assist them greatly as they begin a meaningful and noble career helping to ensure public safety within the state's communities while working to help offenders successfully assimilate back into society."

The 23 new parole officer recruits will report to one of the agency's 10 district offices, located throughout the New Jersey. The recruits will be paired with a Sr. Parole Officer, who will act as a field training officer for the next four to six weeks. The recruits will learn the nuances of their new job—serving as Parole Officer Recruits for one year before being promoted to the title of Senior Parole Officer, following the successful completion of their working test period.

The mission of the New Jersey State Parole Board is to promote public safety and foster the successful rehabilitation of offenders through the implementation of policies that result in effective parole case management. A multitude of innovative parole initiatives assist the Board in addressing the needs of the community, crime victims, and offenders through responsible decision-

making and supervision processes. These initiatives assist the New Jersey State Parole Board in meeting its important goals which include increased public safety, sustained recidivism rate reductions, and the successful and sustainable reintegration of offenders.

July 20<sup>th</sup> to  
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