



**MAHWAH-
RAMSEY**



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06/14/2022 7:43 p.m.

Charges Dropped

Authorities Drop Charges After Cybersleuth Proves Ramsey Responder Was Wrongfully Accused

A Ramsey volunteer first responder who was wrongfully accused in a child-porn case was vindicated after a private forensic investigator proved his innocence.

Charles Gilbride had no idea what was happening when cybercrime detectives from the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office raided his home and arrested him early on the morning of Dec. 2, 2021.

That's because he hadn't done anything wrong.

First responders, like many others, found it impossible to believe the 2015 Ramsey High School graduate – who'd been a lieutenant with the all-volunteer Ramsey Rescue Squad – was capable of such crimes.

That didn't stop Gilbride's being fired from his full-time plumber's job and dismissed from the rescue squad, defense attorney James B. Sepowitz said.

Gilbride, 26, never stopped proclaiming his innocence. He refused to accept a plea deal just to avoid prosecution.

Then he met John Lucich.

Lucich, a retired New Jersey Attorney General's detective, operates eForensix, a cyber-investigation firm based in Union that provides exactly the kind of service that Gilbride needed.

The "diligent work" of Lucich and his team of forensic techs "determined that the Dropbox account utilizing Mr. Gilbride's name and email address was created by another individual based in Queens, New York" who uploaded the "illicit depictions" that investigators found, Sepowitz said.

"Furthermore, the claim in the search warrant application that Mr. Gilbride accessed the Dropbox account at his residence in Ramsey turned out to be inaccurate," the attorney added.

"Finally, a forensic analysis conducted by the Cyber Crimes Unit of all electronic devices seized from Mr. Gilbride resulted in a finding of no child pornography files, as asserted by Mr. Gilbride since being arrested and wrongfully accused of a crime he did not commit," he said.

Presented with the proof, Bergen County Prosecutor Mark Musella's office agreed to an outright dismissal of the criminal charge, which was approved by a Superior Court judge in Hackensack on June 9, Sepowitz noted.

A new investigation is pursuing the actual lawbreaker, he said.

Gilbride, who his lawyer said "is not technologically savvy," is now that person's victim, having had his identity stolen.

He "appreciates his family and friends who presumed his innocence and backed him throughout this difficult process," Sepowitz said.

Gilbride also thanked Lucich and the team of attorneys at Foy & Sepowitz in Hackensack for "exposing the flaws in the state's case and corroborating Mr. Gilbride's claim of innocence," he said.

The volunteer public servant is "thrilled to finally clear his name," Sepowitz said. He now hopes to "regain his reputation and put his life back together after being wrongfully accused of an abhorrent crime."