Officer with checkered past hired by Schenectady Sheriff's Office

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May 24, 2016

ALBANY, N.Y. (NEWS10) – A former Albany police officer with a checkered past is now working at the Schenectady County Sheriff's Department, hired for the job while still on suspension from his previous employer.

Accusations of excessive force, misconduct, unlawful arrests and searches, and most recently an incident with a 12-year-old boy this past Halloween have surrounded former Albany Police Officer Michael Geraci Jr.

In 2006, Geraci was cleared of any wrongdoing after being accused of excessive force against an elderly man he arrested, but he was suspended for filing a false incident report.

In 2013, Geraci was placed on administrative duties for a time after being accused of unlawful arrests and searches. This month, three lawsuits have been filed by people who claim to be victims of those 2013 arrests.

An Albany Police Department Spokesperson says Geraci was still on suspension regarding the Halloween incident near his home when he was hired in April by Schenectady County Sheriff Dominic Dagostino.

"I have every bit of confidence in this young man that he's going to be a great addition to our force," said Dagostino of Geraci.

Tim Lynch, Director of the Cato Institute's Project on Criminal Justice, says the issue with Geraci's hiring is not one of legality.

"We're not talking about something that's illegal," said Lynch. "We're talking about practices that are concerning to the community."

Lynch says the decision could potentially open the county up to liability problems.

"That's an argument that they can take to the jury to say, 'look they knew he was a problem and yet they hired him anyway.'"

Dagostino says he stands by his decision to hire Geraci.

"The level of experience that this young man brings to our department would have cost me tens of years and hundreds of thousands of dollars to get a person of this level," said Dagostino. "I'm not put in this position to make political safe decisions. I'm put in this position to make the right ones. This was the right choice."