



N.J. cop was accused of groping a woman at a sports bar. Now he's suspended.

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A Long Branch police officer is under investigation after allegedly groping a woman Friday and has been suspended without pay.

Police Chief Jason Roebuck on Wednesday confirmed the suspension of Patrick Joyce Jr. Long Branch Mayor John Pallone said the investigation was being handled by the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office.

Long Branch Lt. Charles Shirley said no arrests had been made as of Tuesday, but declined to comment further.

Details of the allegation were confirmed by two law enforcement sources with knowledge of the investigation who declined to be identified because they weren't publicly authorized to speak on the matter.

The alleged incident occurred at Jack's Goal Line Stand, a Long Branch sports restaurant that closed for part of Friday evening to host a party celebrating new and promoted officers. A message requesting comment from the restaurant was not returned.

Joyce, 35, did not return an interview request. Joyce's wife, Melissa Joyce, said by phone that neither of them would comment and directed questions to their lawyer, but she declined to provide a lawyer's name or contact information.

Joyce, who entered the city payroll in 2004, has a unique record in the coastal city.

In 2010 he was charged with aggravated assault after an off-duty fight outside a Neptune Township nightclub, according to court records, and he was temporarily suspended from the department. He later pleaded guilty to simple assault and received a year of probation.

Once he was back to work, Joyce reported using force more than almost any other New Jersey cop.

Joyce used his hands and fists, a baton and other types of force 52 times from 2012 through 2016, according to The Force Report, an investigation by NJ Advance Media built around the most comprehensive statewide database of police force in the U.S.

Only four other officers in the state used force more often, out of more than 17,000 cops who reported using force.

Joyce also received an award in 2013 for disarming an armed suspect, as well as an “honorable service” mention in the department’s 2017 public safety report for tracking down another suspect wanted in a stabbing incident.