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Wisconsin Capitol Police incident reports released with protesters' addresses, driver's license and Social Security numbers

by Judith Davidoff

on Monday 09/16/2013 5:33 pm

When Craig Spaulding reported to Dane County Court Friday for a pretrial conference, he was given a stack of documents by the Department of Justice attorney prosecuting him for permit violations at the state Capitol. Included among these papers were Capitol Police reports on other protesters, with their personal information intact, including home addresses, driver's license numbers and, in some cases, Social Security numbers.

Arthur Kohl-Riggs, who frequently shoots video of the noontime Solidarity Sing Along at the state Capitol - where protesters gather to oppose Gov. Scott Walker's policies and police ticket participants who refuse to get a permit - says he knows of at least 35 people whose personal information was released in police reports to others.

Spaulding alone, however, received personal information on more than 60 other individuals who were cited at the Capitol.

Dana Brueck, spokeswoman for the Department of Justice, was in a meeting Monday afternoon and did not immediately return a message left with a receptionist. The Department of Justice is prosecuting all of the Capitol citations except those that involve criminal charges.

Calls to Stephanie Marquis, spokeswoman for the Department of Administration, and the DOA media line were also not immediately returned.

Capitol Police, who compile the police reports, are part of the Department of Administration. The DOA legal department is responsible for furnishing the police reports to DOJ prosecutors or to individuals who ask for them through an open records request.

It is unclear why Spaulding and others were provided any information on other protesters or why sensitive personal information was not redacted before it was released. When the state Department of Revenue in 2012 published an annual sales report online that included the Social Security numbers of thousands of state residents who sold their homes in 2011, the state offered to pay for a year of credit-monitoring services for those affected.

Kohl-Riggs says the recent release of private information by Capitol Police could discourage protesters who fear their financial security will be compromised if they are arrested. "It seems a compelling reason to stay away," he says.