

★ Plea of guilty in carjacking

Attorney for man allegedly assaulted by police in incident wants them charged

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A criminal defendant allegedly assaulted earlier this year by Suffolk County police officers after he had been handcuffed and arrested pleaded guilty Wednesday to petit larceny during a brief hearing in Central Islip.

Christopher Cruz of Long Beach, who had faced felony grand larceny and third-degree criminal mischief charges, acknowledged before Suffolk District Court Judge Richard Dunne that he had entered a 2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee parked on Oakland Ave. in Port Jefferson Station on Feb. 23 and drove off without the owner's permission. Dunne sentenced Cruz to time served.

Cruz's Legal Aid attorney, Stephanie Giancrisofaro, declined comment after Wednesday's hearing.

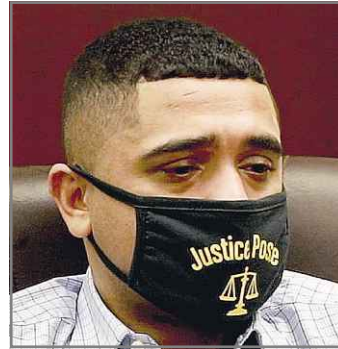
Prosecutors told Dunne in

June that they were dropping second-degree assault, third-degree criminal mischief and resisting arrest charges against Cruz, saying that they were "not sustainable charges."

Two Suffolk police officers captured on a body camera video allegedly assaulting Cruz were suspended without pay and are the target of a criminal investigation by Suffolk District Timothy Sini's office, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone and former Suffolk Police Commissioner Geraldine Hart announced in early March.

Sini's office did not return a request for comment Wednesday. A Suffolk police spokesman declined comment.

Hempstead civil rights attorney Frederick Brewington, whole filed a notice of claim — a precursor to a lawsuit — against Suffolk County and its



REECE T. WILLIAMS

Christopher Cruz

police department on Cruz's behalf in March, called for criminal charges to be filed against the officers who allegedly assaulted Cruz and cops who witnessed the incident but declined to intervene.

"Their arrests should come promptly and their prosecutions should be consistent with their violations of the public trust," Brewington said.

Suffolk police said officers in an unmarked car spotted Cruz drive the stolen Jeep Grand Cherokee into the parking lot of a gas station on Route 112, and when police in marked ve-

hicles arrived at the scene, Cruz rammed a patrol car, injuring an officer, before driving off, police officials said.

A short time later, Cruz lost control of the Grand Cherokee and slammed into a snowbank near the intersection of Canal Road and Strathmore Court in Mount Sinai, according to authorities. He rammed a second police car and crashed into a snowbank before he was arrested shortly after. A second officer was hurt while Cruz was being taken into custody, police said.

The notice of claim filed by Brewington, however, paints a much different picture. The court papers say police officers punched and kicked Cruz while he was face down in dirty snow.

"Eat the [expletive] snow, you [ethnic slur]," a plainclothes Suffolk police officer told Cruz, according to the court papers.

Suffolk police have not revealed the names of the disciplined officers or the result of an internal investigation launched into the alleged beating.