

# 92 investors suing former Copley coach Mark Dente now seeking \$109 million



Debt claims against former Copley High School basketball coach and property investor Mark Dente doubled to \$109 million with a 92nd investor suing this month.

Meanwhile, the state of Ohio has secured an agreement with Dente and a judgement in Summit County Court of Common Pleas barring the businessman and his associates from transferring, buying or selling assets, accessing bank accounts or destroying records for his companies. The agreement came weeks after a court-appointed

receiver alleged that Dente and his son were defying an order to leave the business alone during the process of determining all assets and liabilities.

Upset investors and state regulators [are calling](#) Dente's property-flipping business a "large-scale Ponzi scheme" built on a "pyramid" of revolving loans intended for property investments but used, in part, as "a personal slush fund" for Dente, his family and friends.

The business [began struggling](#) late last year to repay private loans.

### **Mark Dente case** [State accuses former Copley coach of Ponzi scheme that bilked investors out of millions](#)

The Ohio Attorney General's Office and Dente's attorney, Michael Creveling, agreed this week to half the state's requests after the Ohio Department of Commerce filed for [an injunction](#) July 1 to stop Dente and his associates from operating the national property-flipping and investment business. Visiting Judge Patricia Cosgrove accepted the agreement, again barring Dente from his business while the court-appointed receiver from Cleveland inspects the books, takes over operation and determines the amount owed to investors.

State attorneys were scheduled to appear in Cosgrove's Summit County courtroom Friday, but that preliminary hearing was considered moot and canceled after the parties secured their agreement Monday.

Meanwhile, at least 90 investors, including financial instruments and companies that represent pools of unnamed investors, have had their lawsuits consolidated under a single case, Christopher Longo v. AEM Services — in reference to the name of an investor and Dente's primary business. All current and future debt collection cases are to be heard

by Cosgrove.

## **Debt doubles with whopping lawsuit**

Until this month, investors from across the country had alleged that Dente was at least 100 days past due on repaying them roughly \$52 million. They loaned the money to Dente on short-term investment deals, often for two months or less, on the promise of a 15 to 30% profit.

The biggest lawsuit, however, landed Aug. 8 when Uniontown-based SDR Realty LLC, another pool of unknown investors, filed a \$57 million claim against Dente.

Michael Ross, the attorney for SDR Realty, would not disclose his investors or talk about the details of their lawsuit without their permission. He did tell the Beacon Journal that he suspected his clients' claim would be the biggest yet. Instead of settling debts for good with the proceeds of property deals, Dente's property flipping or wholesale real estate business unsustainably paid off old loans with new ones.

Ross said SDR Realty's lending kept Dente's business "afloat."

SDR Realty made 90 separate loans to Dente since 2020. The outstanding loans rolled into a "replacement note" this year, which was made on a verbal agreement and not signed, according to SDR Realty's lawsuit. The massive loan at the end of the series of deals totaled \$43 million in principal and \$18.7 million in profits, of which SDR Realty is seeking \$57 million total, plus interest and attorney fees. If the \$57 million is not paid in full, SDR Realty is threatening to go after \$128

million, which appears to be the sum total of the deals in the past two years.

### **Foul play?** [Former Copley coach Mark Dente accused of defaulting on \\$53.1 million in loans](#)

A message was left Thursday with Creveling, a civil litigation attorney with an office located behind the Summit Mall on Smith Road.

The Ohio location of Dente's primary business, AEM Services, is on the other side of the mall at the corner of South Miller Road and West Market Street. Dente has not responded to multiple attempts to seek comment.

Dente's business also has a location in Arizona and property listings in Ohio, Missouri, Texas, Nevada and Alabama.

## **Son in on father's business, ensnared by his lawsuits**

Dente's son, Anthony, participated in his father's business, according to financial documents disclosed to the Beacon Journal by investors or attached to the lawsuits. Anthony Dente was the real estate agent who worked some of the property deals his father arranged with investor money.

Now Anthony Dente is fighting to shield his own business from his father's litigation. Edward Spencer Muse, an attorney with the same business address as Creveling, is representing the son and Mark Dente's wife, Sharon. Debtors accuse Sharon and Mark Dente of using some of the investments on mortgages, jet skis and other personal purchases, including a home for one of his executives.

FTF Lending LLC, a private lender incorporated in Delaware and doing business out of Cleveland, filed a lawsuit this month that seeks restitution through, among other assets, a Melcher Avenue house on West Reservoir in Portage Lakes. The lender is effectively suing other investors from Florida, New York, Texas, Ohio and elsewhere who are also seeking to liquidate Dente's business and personal assets, which they argue they are entitled to because Dente signed his loans on behalf of himself, personally, and AEM Services, his limited liability company.

The Dentes — as well as AEM executives Brian Buckham, who was COO and president; Jason Ramus, vice president of Business Development and National Wholesale; and Mark Gathagan, vice president of Capital Investment and Finance — have all denied allegations made by investors or, in briefs filed by their attorneys, claimed they lack the knowledge needed to respond to various claims of fraud.

In the Longo lawsuit, which encompasses the other investor court filings, attorney Muse made a motion Tuesday asking the county court to allow Anthony Dente to continue to sell property in Northeast Ohio, including a home in Warrensville Heights purchased and rehabbed before the lawsuits were filed. The property and others have been purchased through Anthony Dente's company, Unlimited Acquisitions LLC., which the son said in the recent court filing is funded by a private investor and not money tied up with his father's business.

The promissory notes that Anthony Dente signed to secure the private loans list Unlimited Acquisition's mailing address as the addresses for his father's business or the personal home of his father and mother in Copley.

Reached by phone Thursday, Muse said he doesn't comment on his client cases as a matter of standard practice. He explained that he subleases space from Creveling's law firm and is otherwise unaffiliated with Mark Dente's attorneys, who share the same business suite.

## **Receiver tells Dentes to stop meddling**

Mark Dente, through an attorney, originally objected to the court's appointment of a receiver to oversee and manage AEM Services and its associated businesses. Dente and AEM had hired the Hillyer Group to review the business's outstanding debt and assets.

Dente later withdrew his objection. Mark Dottore, president and CEO of Cleveland-based [Dottore Companies, LLC](#), was appointed as receiver June 22. On July 1, the judge granted the state a restraining order barring the Dentes from their businesses.

On Aug. 10, however, Dottore's attorney filed a complaint with Cosgrove, alleging that the Dentes have not obeyed the court-order to stay away.

"Mark Dente has been lying to the Receiver and his attorneys about a host of issues, and Anthony Dente continues to sell real estate," Dottore's attorney, Robert Stefancin, wrote to the judge.

Stefancin listed eight properties, including three in Akron and the rest in Cuyahoga or Portage counties, that have been bought or sold by Anthony Dente since the restraining order. The attorney alleged that the transactions were facilitated by funds commingled with AEM Services and its associated companies.

Muse, representing Anthony Dente, made a motion to intervene the

following day and, this week, asked the judge to release Anthony Dente and his company, Unlimited Acquisitions, from the list of entities under the control of the receiver.

A message was left Thursday with Dottore Companies seeking details on the financial review of AEM Services' assets, operations and liabilities.

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