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himself as a licensed Certified Public Accountant (CPA) was ordered to pay a hefty amount of restitution and serve the next year on probation.

Jan. 21, 2014

The owner of an accounting practice in Dowagiac, Michigan, who misrepresented himself as a licensed Certified Public Accountant (CPA) was ordered to pay a hefty amount of restitution and serve the next year on probation.

Charles Ross, 58, of St. Joseph, owned Charles C Ross CPA PC on Pennsylvania Ave., in Dowagiac. On Friday, Cass County Circuit Court Judge Michael Dodge sentenced Ross to one year of probation on three felony counts of unauthorized practice of accounting.

Ross, who pleaded guilty to the charges in October of last year, must pay \$39,295 in restitution to a family that contracted his services thinking he was a licensed CPA.

Speaking at Friday's sentencing hearing, one of the victims said accounting errors made by Ross resulted in severe financial hardship for his family.

"It might seem like a victimless crime, but the financial effect on myself personally and my family has been absolutely devastating," the victim said. "It really has hit home and it hurts."

The court heard that, in February of 2013, one of the victims filed a police report alleging he had lost a considerable amount of money due to poor financial decisions made by Ross.

Dodge said a resulting investigation with the department of labor revealed that Ross' CPA license had lapsed or had been suspended by the state. This stemmed, Dodge

said, from a previous complaint dated Dec. 4, 2008, for a rule violation resulting in a

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Dodge noted that this was Ross' first conviction of any kind and that he was very active in the community. Dodge said Ross was a member of the Dowagiac Rotary Club and an office holder for Child and Family Services of Southwest Michigan.

Dodge said Ross had been practicing as a legitimate CPA since 1982 up until the incident. Defense attorney John Magyar said Ross plans to have his CPA license renewed.

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