

Pacifica accountant Mark Christopher Sturm was arraigned December 13, accused of pocketing tens of thousands of dollars from a Peninsula pizza chain. Sturm, 70, faces a preliminary hearing on one count of felony embezzlement on February 23, 2017 at 1:30 p.m. in San Mateo County Superior Court in Redwood City. The client, Zorba's Pizza, hired Sturm to do accounting, payroll, and tax work. When the company conducted a recent audit, it discovered he had pilfered \$55,000 from the company's bank accounts, San Mateo County sheriff's officials said. At the same time, the business — which operates restaurants in San Mateo, Millbrae, and South San Francisco — discovered the cash missing from its bank accounts, it also learned that Sturm had not paid \$60,000 in required state and federal payroll taxes, officials said.

Sturm also was sued December 6 by local business owner Pearl Smith, president of The Total Touch on San Pedro Road. She filed a civil claim against Sturm in San Mateo County Superior Court alleging erroneous business and personal tax returns for 2015. A hearing on that case is scheduled for February 6 (docket number 16SCS00794).

Alan Wald