

**SFGate**.com**Hayward PD's 'sexual conquests' prove costly**

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**(06-10) 14:23 PDT HAYWARD** -- The city of Hayward will pay nearly \$5 million to 14 female Police Department employees who accused male supervisors of regarding them as "fair game for potential sexual conquests" and said male officers talked of "converting" their lesbian colleagues, attorneys in the case said today.

The women, current or former officers and civilian employees, said in a lawsuit that the work environment at the Police Department was "hostile toward female and lesbian officers." They accused department officials of discriminating against them because of their gender or sexual orientation.

The city has agreed to pay \$4.95 million to settle the suit, said Stan Casper, an attorney for the plaintiffs.

City Attorney Michael Lawson said Hayward had agreed to the settlement without admitting liability. Hayward's insurance carrier will make the payout, he said.

The suit, filed in 2007 in Alameda County Superior Court, said many male officers were openly resentful of female officers and seemed to regard law enforcement as "men's work."

"Such men express or maintain a view that women cannot or should not wield power or authority, particularly when such power may be enforced through the threat of physical violence or the application of physical strength," the suit said.

Of the 14 plaintiffs, nine are still with the department, including two lieutenants and one sergeant, Casper said. The rest were fired or forced out, the attorney said.

The plaintiffs said women who made themselves "sexually available" to male officers were promoted. Any woman who was promoted, however, became the target of rumors that she "provided sexual favors to a male superior," the suit said.

Lesbian officers, meanwhile, were considered targets for "conversion" to heterosexuality, the suit said.

The 85-page complaint detailed affairs, threats, internal-affairs investigations and an instance of locker-room groping between a female police clerk and an on-duty male officer.

"The settlement reflects years of unfair treatment of female officers and employees, including unfairness in assignments, promotions, discipline and retaliation," Casper said. "Most significantly, it addressed the department historically turning a blind eye to years of complaints by females."

Casper said that "there is reason for optimism going forward because the department has a new chief of police," Ron Ace, who got the job in January after serving as interim chief for about nine months.

In an e-mail sent to police employees last week, Ace wrote that it was "imperative that we all move forward from this lawsuit with a renewed sense of dedication to serving the people of Hayward and their law enforcement needs."

Referring to the nine plaintiffs who are still on the force, Ace wrote, "While they will not receive special treatment as a result of the lawsuit or settlement, they should also not be subject to any reprisals or retaliation. As your chief, I will not tolerate such conduct."

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