

Updated: 5:35 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2014 | Posted: 11:33 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2014

Fired firefighter, town settle lawsuit

COMMENT (3)

Email 5

Share 13

Tweet 5

ShareThis 66

Related

[View Larger](#)

Jason Weeks settled his lawsuit with the town, receiving \$300,000, according to court documents.

By Michele Dargan

Daily News Staff Writer

Fired firefighter Jason Weeks has settled his whistleblower lawsuit with the town for \$300,000.

It is the single largest amount paid by the town in recent history to settle a lawsuit filed by an employee or former employee.

The town proposed the agreement, and both parties signed the deal Monday.

The Town Council Wednesday voted 2-1, with Councilman Richard Kleid dissenting, to accept the settlement. Kleid said he felt the town had a good case and wanted to take it to trial. Council President Robert Wildrick and Councilman Michael Pucillo were absent from the meeting.

"I have no regrets about blowing the whistle on those who lied in an official investigation; and would do so again, even knowing that they would go after me in an attempt to destroy me," Weeks wrote in a statement. "This case has been very hard on my family but in the end, my family comes first and I settled this case for my family."

Weeks, 42, now owns a property management company.

The agreement resolves all issues and dismisses all damages and claims made by Weeks against the town. It also includes all claims for recovery of attorneys' fees.

A former battalion chief for Palm Beach Fire-Rescue, Weeks was demoted in October 2011 and fired in December 2012 after an internal investigation determined he had used town equipment, while on town time, to work on a union-backed website critical of the town's pension cuts.

In his lawsuit filed in April 2012, Weeks contends that he engaged in protected whistleblower activity before his demotion and firing, while other department brass, who also were involved but denied it, retained their jobs.

"It's a bittersweet feeling to settle this case when I know that the other party has maliciously destroyed my career, all because I tried to stand up to the (Town) Council on behalf of all firefighters to preserve our hard-earned pensions," Weeks' wrote. "It's too bad that the upper-management team of the Fire Service who knew of, participated in and even contributed to the pension website lacked the courage to tell the truth, and acknowledge their role and knowledge in this website. I now doubt that any of them would have the courage to pull someone out of a burning building, which is one of the reasons morale is so low there."

The \$300,000 will be paid by the town's insurance company, Town Manager Peter Elwell said in a statement.

"It is a business decision urged by the insurance company based on the cost of this litigation and the inherent risk in any litigation," Elwell said in the statement. "The town was willing to go to trial in this case. On the facts and the law, we are confident the town would have prevailed. However, for business reasons, the town concurred with the insurance company and approved the proposal for settlement, which was accepted by Mr. Weeks."

"The town made a sound business decision to resolve this case, as did Jason," said Isidro "Sid" Garcia, Weeks' attorney. "There was obviously a great deal of emotion in this case and a very interesting set of characters I got to know of and about on the island, a place where the air is still very rarefied. But in the end, both sides gave a little to get this case resolved."

In March 2013, the town finalized settlement agreements with the last three of six police officers who filed legal claims alleging harassment and discrimination against the town. Those legal claims cost the town and its insurance carrier \$1.2 million in legal settlements and fees. The officers agreed to drop their claims and resign from the department. Three of those officers received \$250,000 each, the largest of the amounts paid out.

COMMENT (3)

Email 5

Share 13

Tweet 5

ShareThis 66

MORE NEWS