



Township of Egg Harbor

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Egg Harbor Township Press Release

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May 21, 2009

The insurance settlement earlier this month of discrimination lawsuits brought by three police dispatchers is an indication that the Township will not allow harassment in the workplace to occur.

“The Township takes allegations seriously, and will hold any employee who violates workplace rules accountable,” said Egg Harbor Township Mayor James “Sonny” McCullough.

In exchange for acknowledging that the Township had not done anything wrong, the publicly funded MEL/JIF insurance company agreed earlier this month to pay \$361,000 to three former female police dispatchers once the dispatchers to drop their lawsuit. Two other police dispatcher lawsuits are still pending.

Linwood lawyer Michael Barker, who was assigned by the MEL/JIF to represent the Township, noted that the Township’s own internal investigation was, in effect, the genesis of the lawsuit.

The MEL/JIF (Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund) consists of municipalities throughout the state who fund the agency.

“In our view, as soon as the Township was made aware of the allegations, an internal affairs investigation was launched and was relentlessly pursued by the police department’s top investigator,” Barker said. “He pursued every lead regardless of where it led.”

The plaintiffs’ lawyer then used much of what was in the internal affairs report to sue the Township, according to Barker. The investigation was conducted by then Captain Blaze Catania, who has since been promoted to police chief.

“As a result of the thorough investigation, follow-up action was taken to eradicate discriminatory conduct in the workplace,” Barker said, adding that the Township discovered that there were “potential violations of state law and procedures.”

Barker said the Township is barred from disclosing whether specific disciplinary action was taken against specific police department employees but noted that the Township will not tolerate violations of the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (“NJLAD”).

As for agreeing to the settlement, Barker explained that any violation of NJLAD can result in extraordinary counsel fees.

“To avoid the continuing litigation expense, the continuing distraction and the disruption of municipal government, the decision was made to settle, with no admission of liability, fault or blame,” Barker explained, noting “three law firms were involved in representing Egg Harbor Township defendants.”

The lawsuit was filed in March 2007. Under the terms of the settlement, Mary Moore will receive \$217,568; Kelley Taylor, \$50,000 and Diane Logisci, \$92,500. The suit alleged that the actions of supervisors created “a hostile environment.”

Most of the payments will be made by the MEL/JIF.

“In my opinion, this is a very professional and well-run department, and there is not much more the police department could have done,” Barker said.