

FRIDAY
December 28, 2001

East Palo Alto ex-cop says he was fired unfairly

Claim is similar to that of officer who was recently reinstated

By Martha McPartlin
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EAST PALO ALTO — An East Palo Alto probationary police officer is seeking \$500,000 in damages from the city, claiming he was unfairly fired for reporting the alleged misconduct of several officers.

The most serious allegations in the claim of former officer Kenneth Cassettari include a fellow officer throwing away drug evidence and others on the force having sex with minors in patrol cars while on duty.

Cassettari was "fired by mail" in May, according to his claim,

which was filed on Nov. 16.

In the claim, Cassettari said he was harassed by fellow officers, who stole his checkbook and vandalized his equipment, and told him to "watch his back." He reported receiving phone calls from other officers calling him a snitch who "could not be trusted."

Neither Cassettari, a former reserve police officer and seasonal officer for the East Bay Regional Park District, nor his attorney could be reached for comment. City Attorney Michael Lawson also could not be reached Thursday.

Cassettari claims he was on patrol last September, less than a month after joining the force, when he and his training officer found "what appeared to be a gram of black tar heroin" in Bell

Street Park.

According to the claim, the training officer told him to throw it into a dumpster, instead of booking it into police property. Cassettari said he testified to the incident for a police Internal Affairs investigation.

Then in March, the claim states, Cassettari told his superiors, including Lt. Rahn Sibley, Lt. Tom Alipio and Chief Wesley Bowling, that a resident had witnessed some officers having sex in their patrol cars while on duty.

Cassettari alleges that he was targeted by other officers and the department for reporting the misconduct. He further claims he was falsely accused of using racial slurs and beating up a handcuffed prisoner.

Cassettari is seeking back pay in addition to the \$500,000

in damages for pain and suffering.

The department has come under fire for alleged officer misconduct in the past, including several lawsuits brought against various officers. Most recently the city was ordered to reinstate a former officer, Robert Cole, who was fired last year for what he claims was a similar incident of whistleblowing.

John HORGAN



IS ON VACATION