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LO ALTO DAILY NEWS

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City settles cop sex case

BY JULIE O'SHEA
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

East Palo Alto has quietly paid \$285,000 to settle a lawsuit brought by three teenage girls who said they were forced to show their breasts to a former police officer during a traffic stop.

The settlement ends a case that began when the mothers of the three victims were

Laughing stops as the city pays out \$285,000

laughed at when they complained at East Palo Alto City Hall about the incident.

The city agreed to pay each of the teens \$95,000 but did not admit any wrongdoing in settling the case.

In addition, Officer Shawn Wildman, who was fired by the city after the incident, paid \$500 to each victim as part of the settlement.

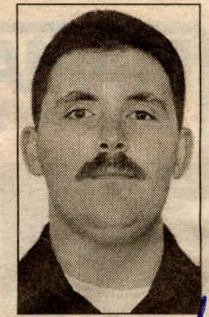
Attorney George Smithwick, who represented the

girls, released the settlement figures to the Daily News yesterday. City Attorney Michael Lawson confirmed that the figures were correct.

City Council settled the lawsuit in November but didn't announce it publicly.

The settlement comes as the city is fighting allegations that it wrongfully fired police

See SETTLES, page 43



WILDMAN

SETTLES

FROM PAGE 1

Sgt. Robert Cole, who accused the police of brutality and sexual improprieties with women who were arrested. The city says Cole was fired for insubordination.

Wildman was charged with five misdemeanors stemming from the July 11, 1999 incident, in which three teenagers were pulled over on Highway 101 as they returned home from a birthday party about 4 a.m.

Wildman detained the young women for over an hour, searching them repeatedly and forcing them to bare their breasts, their attorney said. The teens said Wildman took them individually to his squad car, groped them and made them pull up their bras. Wildman then let the teens — two who were 18 and one who was 16 — leave without writing a ticket.

The teens, accompanied by their mothers, reported the incident the next morning to East Palo Alto police. The mothers of the victims claim East Palo Alto police laughed in their faces, although Chief Wes Bowling later told the Daily News he investigated their complaint.

The mothers also called the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, said Smithwick, and were referred back to the East Palo Alto police. Only after filing a claim against the city did the District Attorney get involved, said Smithwick.

Wildman was hired by East Palo Alto police in April 1998 and fired in August 1999, shortly before the end of his one-year probationary period.

Smithwick, the plaintiffs' attorney, said he believes Wildman may be living in Florida.