

3 Civil Rights Lawsuits Filed Against Enfield Claiming Former Officer Used Excessive Force



Three lawsuits charge that former Enfield police Officer Matthew Worden violated the three plaintiffs' civil rights when he used excessive force during their arrests.

By Mikaela Porter contact the reporter Crime Law Enforcement

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ENFIELD The town was served with three lawsuits Tuesday charging that former Enfield police Officer Matthew Worden violated the three plaintiffs' civil rights when he used excessive force during their arrests.

Worden, who was a K9 officer, was fired Oct. 3 after an internal investigation into charges that he used excessive force during an arrest of a Windsor man in April. After that arrest, others came forward charging Worden with using excessive force in other cases.

The suits were filed in Superior Court by A. Paul Spinella, the attorney representing Enfield residents Barbara Crowley and Ronnie and Frank Salas.

Worden, a 10-year veteran of the Enfield police, was the subject of 14 internal affairs investigations before his dismissal in connection to his arrest of Mark Maher of Windsor in April.

"This is the first in what will be a series of lawsuits that we are bringing against not only former Officer Worden but also his other cohorts in the department," Spinella said Tuesday. "This case cries out for some sort of criminal investigation and it is our hope that lawsuits will inspire that to happen."

Two other Enfield officers, Jaime Yott and Michael Emons, were given 60- and 90-day suspensions, respectively, over Maher's arrest.

Crowley was arrested on Dec. 4, 2011, at the Mount Carmel Society on Park Avenue during a dispute involving hall rental and cleanup. During the dispute, Worden was one of the officers who responded to a call to police. Crowley said an MRI revealed that she had a fractured tibia, bone bruising and torn ligaments in her right leg, and a torn ligament and a torn tendon in her right elbow. Crowley, who had no prior criminal record, was charged with breach of peace, resisting arrest and assault on a police officer. Crowley completed a special probation program, after which her charges were dismissed.

The other two lawsuits arose from an incident on Dec. 26, 2011, outside the CVS Pharmacy at 47 Hazard Ave. Ronnie Salas charges that Worden punched him and smashed his head into a police car door frame during his arrest. His brother, Frank, lost his two front teeth after Worden slammed his head into the pavement, the lawsuit alleges.

Ronnie Salas was charged with interfering with an officer, assault on a police officer and second degree breach of peace. Frank Salas was charged with second-degree breach of peace and interfering with an officer. All charges were eventually dropped.

Enfield police conducted an internal affairs investigation of Worden following the April 1 arrest of Mark Maher, who claimed he was beaten by Worden during an arrest. Maher was charged with resisting arrest but those charges were dismissed in Enfield Superior Court. Enfield police sought an arrest warrant charging Worden with third-degree assault and fabricating evidence, but Hartford State's Attorney Gail Hardy declined to sign the arrest warrant.

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