

LOCAL

Lawsuit settled in 2013 North Side traffic stop

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A 47-year-old woman has been awarded a \$105,000 settlement in a November 2013 incident in which she alleged two Minneapolis police officers pulled her over for an unspecified offense and beat her.

Celeste Dawkins filed a lawsuit last year alleging that she was beaten by officer Cory Fitch during a Nov. 23, 2013, traffic stop in north Minneapolis. Dawkins alleges that after being pulled over, she got out of her car and was walking around the back to avoid traffic when Fitch "purposely steered" his squad car in her direction, striking her and her vehicle.

"Fitch exited his vehicle, yelled obscenities at Dawkins, and proceeded to kick Dawkins with his feet and hit Dawkins with his hands," the suit read.

According to the lawsuit, she sustained "severe, neck, back and hip injuries" and was later taken to the hospital. It was unclear what prompted the traffic stop.

Dawkins later amended the suit, which sought \$100,000 in damages, to include another officer, Jeffrey Sworski, who she also accused of kicking her.

The settlement, approved this week by the ways and means committee, awaits full council approval, which is considered a formality. Fitch serves on the board of the Minneapolis Police Federation, which represents the department's rank-and-file officers.

"The settlement is still subject to city council approval but we are glad that we were able to achieve justice for our client in this case," said Dawkins' attorney, Oliver Nelson.

"Now, hopefully, our client can begin to put the nightmare of this incident behind her."

An e-mail to the city attorney's office, which represented the officers, was not returned on Monday afternoon. The police department did not immediately respond to e-mails seeking comment.

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