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FEATURED

BREAKING

Lancaster woman sues former police chief, officer, department and city

By Haley Jones hjones@thelancasternews.com

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A Lancaster County woman filed a lawsuit Monday, March 6, against the city of Lancaster, Lancaster Police Department, former Police Chief Scott Grant and former LPD Sgt. Peter Beck.

Anaysheon Coffey is suing the city and police department for negligence in regard to hiring, supervision, training and retention, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution without probable cause, as well as monetary liabilities. She is suing Beck and Grant for violations of her civil rights — Beck for unreasonable search and seizure, and Grant for supervisory liability.

The lawsuit addresses a situation that occurred Aug. 25, 2020, when (then) officer Beck entered Coffey's home without a warrant, after coming to the home looking for her child's father. In the suit, Coffey said Beck knocked and asked to enter, but Coffey denied him entrance without a warrant. Coffey said Beck "barged in," and began to illegally search the apartment. Coffey was then arrested, and later released on bond.

The charges against Coffey were dropped Jan. 24, 2022, but she said she was never notified of this dismissal.

Coffey, who is being represented by Tyler Bailey with Bailey Law Firm in Columbia, is asking for a trial by jury.

She is seeking actual, incidental and consequential damages on all causes of actions, punitive damages on Beck's charge, the city and police department charge of malicious prosecution without a probable cause, Grant's charge and the city of Lancaster's charge, as well as attorney's fees and expenses related to the suit.

Turbulent history

The city's turbulent history with Beck dates back to April 2020, when he joined the Lancaster Police Department under former chief Grant.

Beck previously worked at the Lancaster County Sheriff's Office, but resigned just one month before joining the Lancaster Police Department. His resignation was due to multiple complaints that he was targeting Black motorists.

According to the lawsuit, Beck, “used the resources and abused the power and authority of his office to racially profile, harass, ridicule, assault and violate the constitutional rights of citizens.”

Coffey’s is one of 27 formal complaints against Beck. In April 2020, the Lancaster branch of the NAACP filed a formal complaint against the city for a violation of civil rights, related to Beck’s treatment of Black citizens.

In April 2021, City Council placed Beck on administrative and offered him \$60,000 (roughly a year’s salary) to resign.

In May 2021, City Council fired Grant due to a “lack of confidence” in his management of complaints against Beck and for hiring him in the first place.

After Grant was terminated, Philip Hall served as interim chief for 10 months before announcing his retirement at a February 2022 City Council meeting, where he criticized council for having “systematically taken steps to destroy our department.”

Brian Small served as interim chief until City Council hired Don Roper as police chief in August 2022.

No comment

Erin Tindal, LPD public information officer, said she can’t answer any questions regarding the suit or how the department might make changes in the future.

Lancaster City Administrator Flip Hutfles said he cannot comment on active lawsuits, but said “public safety is fundamental to the quality of life and economic prosperity of any community.

“We strive to be proactive in crime prevention throughout the entire city and to work in conjunction with our law enforcement partners to ensure citizens and visitors can conduct their daily activities without the fear of becoming victims of crime and help reduce their risk of being a victim of crime,” Hutfles said.

Haley