

\$1 million payday

By Jill Way, reporter jillw@bolivarmonews.com | Posted: Wednesday, March 15, 2017 6:45 am

The terms of the City of Bolivar's settlement with two former police officers were released late Monday, showing a total payout of around \$881,000 to the former employees and their attorney.

Jamie Sharp's settlement totaled \$515,386.91 with \$294,617.15 going directly to the plaintiff and \$220,769.76 going to his attorney, Jay Kirksey.

Dusty Ross' settlement totaled \$365,386.91 with \$204,617.16 going to the plaintiff and \$160,769.75 going to Kirksey.

Kirksey said with all fees included, the city reached its \$1 million insurance policy limit. He said the policy had a "wasting" provision, so money spent on the city's defense was deducted from the limit amount.

"They paid every penny," Kirksey said. "My clients would not settle for a penny less but did not want to hurt the city and proceed for more than the policy limit."

According to City Administrator Darin Chappell, the city was only responsible for its insurance deductible. The exact amount of legal fees and the city's deductible were not available as of press time Tuesday.

City officials said they released the settlement terms after attorneys confirmed the judge assigned to the case signed off on the agreement. Online docket entries on Missouri Casenet indicate the case was officially dismissed with prejudice Monday.

Payments were issued last week.

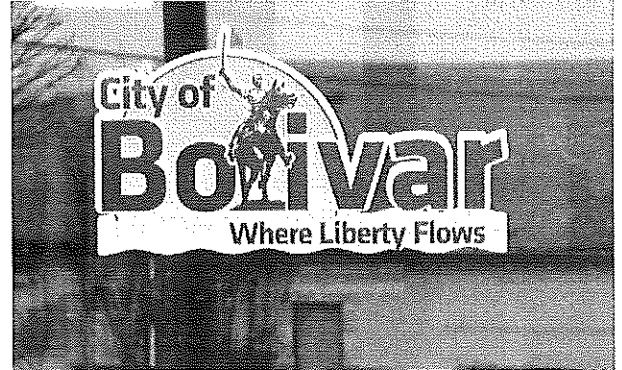
Chappell offered no further comment. Mayor John Best declined to comment on the settlement.

More about the case

"My clients, Jamie Sharp and Dusty Ross, spent years protecting the citizens of Bolivar as law enforcement officers, with exemplary performance," Kirksey said. "Jamie and Dusty reported the city administrator and then chief of police for conduct prohibited under the city's discrimination policy. There occurred no investigation, nor findings as to the reports. Instead, multiple decisions were made in violation of city policy and incomplete information was disclosed to the aldermen. The legal action has now been resolved."

The lawsuits filed in November 2013 cited discrimination and retaliation on the part of city officials in the termination of Ross' employment and in a demotion of Sharp.

Ross was fired by the Bolivar Board of Aldermen during a Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2013, meeting, according to BH-FP archives. Sharp was demoted from a lieutenant position within the department before resigning.



1A-Settlement.jpg

The city of Bolivar recently settled a lawsuit with two former police officers for more than \$880,000.

According to depositions, Ross and Sharp filed complaints of sexual harassment against former police chief John Walter in September 2012.

Sharp filed subsequent grievances with the city regarding Chappell's handling of the allegations against Walter.

According to depositions, the formal complaints led to retaliation against Sharp and Ross. Deposition testimony appears to confirm those retaliatory actions.

Defendants named in the lawsuits are Mayor John Best, City Administrator Darin Chappell, former Police Chief Stephen Hamilton, the City of Bolivar, independent investigator David Zuhlke, Aldermen John Credille, Steve Skopec, Vicky Routh and Chris Warwick and former Aldermen Terry Cornell, Darren Crowder and Julie Bond.

Former alderman Arleen Ferguson was not a defendant in either case. She either voted against motions that involved city actions taken against the two former officers or was absent during meetings.

More information will be available online and in print as it becomes available.