

How pervasive was harassment at Kendall Sheriff's Department?

By Steve Lord

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YORKVILLE — The settlement by Kendall County of a sexual harassment lawsuit against the Sheriff's Department's chief deputy has officials wondering just how pervasive sexual harassment in the office might be.

According to testimony referred to in transcripts from the lawsuit, filed in 2008 in the Northern District Federal Court in Chicago, incidents of sexual harassment were common and part of the culture in the office, at least during the time Lisa Easi was promoted to administrative assistant to Deputy Chief Terry Tichava in 2000 to the time she was dismissed in 2007.

The Kendall County Board last week approved a \$188,000 settlement to Easi to end the lawsuit, which was at pre-trial stage in federal court. The county also is responsible for \$195,000 in lawyer's fees the county incurred to defend Tichava

and the sheriff's office, making the total cost of the lawsuit \$383,000.

As part of the settlement, neither Tichava nor the Sheriff's Department admitted to any wrongdoing.

While no one is talking about the situation publicly, court transcripts paint a picture of several potential sexual harassment incidents, at work and during off-hours in social situations involving Sheriff's Department personnel.

The lawsuit says Easi was "subjected to repeated sexual harassment from her supervisor, Chief Deputy Terry Tichava, in the form of statements, lewd gestures laden with innuendos ... inappropriate touching and inappropriate conduct."

In a motion filed by Tichava's attorneys for dismissal of the case, they said the situation was mutual.



Terry T. Tichava

"(Easi) and Chief Tichava mutually exchanged jokes, banter and innuendo on a daily basis, a lot of it suggestive or sexual in nature," the motion to dismiss says.

In response, Easi's attorneys filed another motion, which says that at a 2006 office holiday party, Tichava "grabbed (Easi's) crotch, buttocks and pinched her breast ..."

Tichava testified that he did not do those things, but testimony from four other people at the party says that he did, according to court records.

Attorneys for Easi said she was dismissed from the office because she filed a harassment complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which provided the basis for the eventual lawsuit.

But attorneys for Tichava said she was dismissed because she directly disobeyed an order from Sheriff Richard Randall and disobeyed office regulations.

In a news release, Randall said Tichava "has my full support ..."

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