



CITY OF OAKLAND
newsrelease
Office of the City Attorney

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Firing of “Riders” Cops Upheld by Arbitrator

OAKLAND, CA – City Attorney John Russo today announced the settlement of an 8-year legal battle with two former City of Oakland police officers who were fired for insubordination and multiple acts of police misconduct.

Former officers Clarence Mabanag and Jude Siapno were fired in 2000 after they refused to cooperate with an Internal Affairs investigation of misconduct by four officers known as the “Riders.” Both Mabanag and Siapno filed grievances challenging their terminations.

On November 13 of last year, Arbitrator Sara Adler issued an opinion denying the grievances and upholding the city’s right to fire Mabanag and Siapno for insubordination. Following the arbitrator’s opinion, the two former officers signed a settlement, finalized last week, ending their grievances and civil complaints. Neither one will receive any money from the City of Oakland.

“If the ruling had gone the other way, it would have been a major financial hit to the city, not to mention a huge setback for police reform in Oakland,” City Attorney Russo said. “We were determined that these fired officers would not receive a dime from Oakland taxpayers. I want to thank the legal team of Meyers Nave and the Law Offices of Karen Snell for their work on this important case.”

“The attorneys for the fired officers spent tens of thousands of dollars fighting these terminations,” said Art Hartinger, chair of the Meyers Nave Labor and Employment Group and lead counsel on the case. “We are gratified that the arbitrator reached a just outcome on behalf of the City of Oakland.”

The Riders – Mabanag, Siapno and two other former officers – were accused of beating suspects, planting evidence and engaging in other illegal acts on Oakland’s streets in the late 1990s.

In 2003, the City of Oakland agreed to a settlement to resolve a civil rights lawsuit accusing the officers of misconduct. The City of Oakland paid \$2.2 million of the \$10.5 million settlement – the rest was paid by the city’s insurer. The city also entered into a Negotiated Settlement Agreement designed to bring a high level of accountability and oversight to the Oakland Police Department.

The alleged leader of the Riders, Frank Vasquez, fled the country and remains a fugitive. The other three officers – Mabanag, Siapno and Matt Hornung – were charged with multiple felonies by the Alameda County District Attorney. Juries in two criminal trials deadlocked on a majority of charges, and none of the Riders were convicted of crimes. Hornung was found not guilty after the second trial and received a \$1.5 million settlement from the city’s insurance carrier. City of Oakland taxpayers did not pay any part of that settlement – it was paid entirely by the insurance carrier.
