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ARGUS-COURIER STAFF

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Lawsuit naming police chief in limbo

A \$5 million harassment lawsuit that named Petaluma Police Chief Patrick Williams has been left in limbo since the woman who filed it was found dead in her Cathedral City home last week.

According to Cathedral City police, former Desert Hot Springs police officer Andrea Heath — who worked under Williams in the southern California department — died from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head last Tuesday.

Heath filed an 81-page lawsuit filed in May 2012, claiming that after she testified against two fellow Desert Hot Springs officers in an FBI civil rights violation case, she was harassed and wrongfully terminated by then-Desert Hot Springs Police Chief Williams, among others. One of the officers Heath testified against, Anthony Sclafani, was convicted of two counts of excessive force against people in custody and was sentenced to four years in prison in July 2012. The other officer, David Henderson, pleaded guilty to misdemeanor excessive force charges and received a year's probation.

Heath's lawsuit against Williams and other high-ranking Desert Hot Springs administrators was recently dismissed by a southern California judge, several of the counts with prejudice. Heath and her attorney, Jerry Streering, filed an appeal on the other counts with the US. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in August and were scheduled to begin settlement talks with the City of Desert Hot Springs last Friday, according to court records.

Williams said Wednesday that his thoughts were with Heath's family. "The federal court acted appropriately in dismissing her untrue allegations, but it's a tragic, sad end for her and my condolences go out to her family and friends," said Williams.

Streering said that Heath's lawsuit could continue if a legal heir or an estate holder chooses to move forward with it, but added that her death weakens the case. Heath is survived by her two

children, an adult son and a young daughter. Steering said that it is too soon to know what will happen to Heath's case.

"A suicide just doesn't make any sense to me," said a stunned Steering Friday afternoon. "We had the settlement hearing today, and I told everyone what had happened. In my opinion, we were going to win the case on appeal. So for her to do this is unbelievable."

(Contact Janelle Wetzstein at janelle.wetzstein@arguscourier.com)

COMMENTS



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She didn't kill herself. And Williams ' thoughts are only on himself! What about the lawsuit nfiled after this one? Will another murder be the result result? P town I would be afraid! Very afraid!

· [October 17 at 8:29pm](#)



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There has already been murders since this scum bag arrived. The PD is covering them up. Chief Williams you are under arrest....You have the right to remain silent . But you really shouldn't . I want you to tell the people of Petaluma what relationship your having with select west side business selling methamphetamine by the pounds . I'll give you all a clue After you get a hair cut. Veronika I am going to request the police report from Desert Hot crank ! He worked for the cartels there and it shows. People if you thought breaking Bad was about somewhere else your wrong . They are buying up lawman from the Mexican boarder to the DEA ! The only war on drugs is make believe . Chief Williams see you at the Downtown assoc meeting coming up I might have a power point presentation for all to see. Great photos emergency call logs ; thanks for the invite Chief.



[Private Investigation](#)

Justice is Coming



[Nicole Rotibi](#)

That's was my dear dear Freind :-)



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.....yes, it most certainly is....unbelievable.

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