

## Desert Sun

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### Trio files lawsuit vs. Hanson

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Former workers claim wrongful termination

Desert Hot Springs

By Marie McCain

The Desert Sun

The former Desert Hot Springs police chief and two other former city employees have filed a wrongful termination lawsuit against the city, alleging they were forced to leave their jobs last year after they testified before a grand jury investigating alleged wrongdoing by then-City Manager Jerry Hanson.

Besides Roy Hill, the lawsuit was filed on behalf of Kathy Ward, the city's former development services manager, and Laurie Scully, the former head of the city's Human Resources Department.

The trio contends Desert Hot Springs violated California labor law by retaliating against them for "disclosing information to a government or law enforcement agency when the employee believes a violation has been committed."

And besides the city of Desert Hot Springs, the Feb. 27 lawsuit also alleges that 25 others it describes as "Does" participated in the retaliation.

Ward, Scully and Hill are seeking back pay and financial compensation for lost wages and benefits, emotional distress and attorney's fees.

Interim City Manager John Soulliere declined to comment on the lawsuit Friday.

"Pending litigation is only discussed in closed session (of the City Council)," he said.

According to the lawsuit, Ward and Scully communicated with the Riverside County District Attorney's office along with the FBI in August 2004.

Hill's communications began four months later.

All three provided information about Hanson's employment contracts with the city, his land deals, his compensation package and conflicts of interest involving Hanson and "certain council members and fraudulent employment filings by city employees," the lawsuit states.

Scully and Ward contend that soon after their contact with those outside agencies, "Hanson and certain employees under his control engaged in a campaign of harassment thereby creating a hostile work environment."

Hill was fired March 18, 2005. He said he has yet to receive an explanation from the city for his termination and believes the action was retaliatory.