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Paterson agrees to pay \$107,000 in excessive force lawsuit against city cops

MARCH 13, 2014, 10:04 AM
 BY BY JOE MALINCONICO
 PATERSON PRESS

PATERSON - The city has agreed to pay \$107,000 to settle a federal lawsuit filed by a man who alleged that Paterson police officers threw him to the ground and kicked him while they were investigating a noise complaint at his niece's backyard birthday party in September 2010.

The man, Ivan Ruiz, says in his lawsuit that he intervened and started asking questions when the officers were arresting Lisandro Zuniga because of the noise.

"This is America. We have rights, including the right to know why we are being arrested," Ruiz said to the officers, according to the lawsuit.



Paterson police headquarters

In his response to those comments, Ruiz alleged in his lawsuit that the officers grabbed him by the back of the head and knocked him to the ground, where they beat him.

Ruiz then was charged with starting a riot. In his lawsuit, Ruiz alleged that he then overheard the officers conspire about what charges to levy against him. The lawsuit said that one suggested they say he punched an officer in the stomach, while another said they should accuse him of elbowing an officer in the face.

The lawsuit names eight different officers, but does not specify what role each one played in the alleged incident.

In July 2011, Ruiz entered pre-trial intervention, a probationary program, on the rioting charge, the lawsuit says.

Shelly Stangler, Ruiz' lawyer, declined to discuss the case until the settlement is finalized. City officials also declined to comment on it. As part of the settlement, the city is admitting no wrongdoing by the police.

The City Council voted 5-2 in favor of the settlement, with Ruby Cotton and Julio Tavarez casting the only votes against it. Councilmen William McKoy and Rigo Rodriguez were not present for the vote.

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