



San Diego City Attorney Jan I. Goldsmith

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: [Gerry Braun](mailto:gbraun@sandiego.gov), Director of Communications: gbraun@sandiego.gov (619) 533-4782

Filner Harassment Case Settled for \$667,000

Benelia Santos-Hunter was mayor's executive assistant for eight months

The City Council today unanimously approved a \$667,000 settlement with Benelia Santos-Hunter, who had sued the City and its former mayor Bob Filner, alleging she was sexually harassed by Filner while working in his office in 2013.

Ms. Santos-Hunter was Filner's executive assistant from January 7, 2013, until his resignation took effect on August 30, 2013. Her lawsuit was filed in August, 2014. It alleged she was sexually harassed on many occasions over the course of eight months and that Filner's inner circle in the Mayor's office knew, yet failed to stop the harassment or prevent further harassment.

Ms. Santos-Hunter was in a unique situation at City Hall. Her office was connected to the Mayor's office by a private door, and she had many interactions with him every day.

Under the settlement, Ms. Santos-Hunter will receive \$667,000 as full settlement of all claims against the City and Filner, including attorney fees. The parties will split the cost of mediation services, which totaled \$4,545.

The settlement is the fourth reached in lawsuits alleging harassment by Filner. Previously, the City paid \$250,000 to Irene McCormack Jackson, who had been Filner's communications director, and \$99,000 to Katherine Ragazzino, a disabled veteran, and Michelle Tyler, Ms. Ragazzino's nurse caretaker. The City publicly apologized to Peggy Shannon, who ran an information desk in City Hall, and it declared a "Peggy Shannon Day" in her honor.

Still to be resolved are lawsuits against the City and Filner by Marilyn McGaughy, an anti-domestic violence advocate, and Stacie McKenzie, a City parks employee.

"Our office conducted an investigation in the summer of 2013 as to what was going on at City Hall regarding harassment and we learned about Ms. Santos-Hunter," City Attorney Jan Goldsmith said. **"This was among the evidence learned during that investigation that prompted us to take action that led to Mr. Filner's resignation."**

California law holds the City strictly liable for sexual harassment conduct of a supervisor (including an elected official) directed at a City employee. Legal liability extends to physical and emotional issues, lost income and other costs, plus the recovery of attorney fees.

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1200 Third Avenue, Suite 1620, San Diego, California 92101-4188 (619) 236-6220