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Suit Alleges Harassment

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STAFF WRITER

A Democratic committeeman has filed an \$80 million suit against the City of Long Beach, charging that his political boss and other city officials demoted and harassed him to the point of irreparable injury after he backed a Republican-led coalition in last year's city council race.

City Corporation Counsel William Holst said Friday he could not comment on the case because he had not yet received a copy of the papers filed Nov. 4.

James Hodge, 25, charges that after placing coalition signs on his lawn and sharply questioning an incumbent Democratic city council candidate during a debate he moderated on WGBB-AM radio, he was ostracized by the party leadership and intentionally harassed and discriminated against on the job at the city animal shelter.

The five-member city council has been all-Democratic since 1996 and controlled by them since 1973.

Longtime Long Beach Democratic leader Eugene Cammarato, who on June 30 left his city job as director of operations — the second highest administrative spot — is a defendant in the case. He could not be reached Friday.

Another defendant, Edwin Eaton, a

Democrat who was the top administrator last fall as acting city manager, has since retired and could not be reached.

The suit filed in the U.S. District Court in Central Islip by Hodge's attorney, Frederick K. Brewington of Hempstead, alleges that on Nov. 8, 2001, two days after the election in which none of the coalition won, he was demoted from assistant animal warden to animal control officer and his

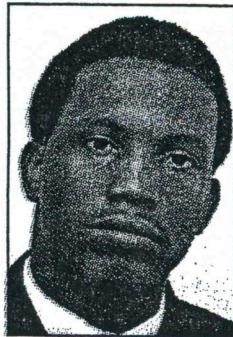
pay status was reduced from Grade 11 to Grade 8.

Hodge charged in the suit that he was harassed by a supervisor on Feb. 4 because of his support for the coalition and became so fearful that he called local police, who he said only noted the incident. Later that day, Cammarato and Eaton arrived at the shelter and "started abusing and cursing" him, the suit alleges.

Experiencing heart palpitations, shortness of breath

and weakness in the knees, Hodge was taken to Long Beach Medical Center, according to court documents. He has been on sick leave since.

The suit charges that Hodge was injured in his person, mental health, concept of self-worth, business property and professional future. It charges that his constitutional rights, state civil rights and civil service rights were violated.



James Hodge