

Town OKs settlement of discrimination suit

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Southampton Town officials voted unanimously yesterday to settle a 2011 federal lawsuit with an African-American parks department employee who claimed bosses and co-workers subjected him to racist remarks and harassment.

Town board members voted 5-0 to approve the settlement with David Coles, 62, at a special meeting. Town officials did not disclose terms of the agreement and declined to comment.

Coles' attorney, Frederick Brewington, said yesterday that the case was "settled to the mutual satisfaction of the parties," but declined to provide details. Coles, a groundskeeper for the town since 2001, retired on July 7, according to town records.

"Mr. Coles is very happy with the disposition of this matter and that it's now behind him, and hopefully the process will be a positive outcome for the town," said Brewington, whose law office is in Hempstead.

In the suit, Coles described a co-worker yelling a racial slur at him and co-workers joking

in text messages in 2008 about killing African-Americans, including President Barack Obama. One employee in that incident was fired after an inquiry by the Secret Service, according to court records.

Coles also said he was passed over for promotions given to white employees and alleged one of his bosses would block doorways he was trying to walk through and once had to be restrained from striking Coles.

Court records show the parties in the case agreed to settle following a July 27 meeting with U.S. Magistrate Judge A. Kathleen Tomlinson.

Coles filed a separate New York State Division of Human Rights complaint in March 2014 in which he says someone left a black stuffed cat in his work truck in 2013 — a sign used by Ku Klux Klan members to signal they were going to lynch a person or burn down a house, according to the complaint — and days later found a noose on a table at work.

Administrative Law Judge Robert Vespoli dismissed the complaint on May 29, agency records show.