
Southampton Village Police Officer Threatens Discrimination Lawsuit

 Staff Writer on Aug 14, 2019

A Southampton Village Police officer is threatening legal action against the village and its police department, claiming he was held back from being promoted to detective because of his race.

Officer Kareem Proctor, 40, filed a notice of claim on July 18 through his attorney, Julissa M. Proaño of the Hempstead-based Law Offices of Frederick K. Brewington.

Mr. Proctor was hired by the Southampton Village Police Department in September 2008. He claims that during his 11-year tenure, he was passed up for promotion because he is black.

In the notice of claim, which is a precursor to a lawsuit, Mr. Proctor said he was assigned to the East End Drug Task Force in 2015 with the expectation that after serving 18 months and a day, he would be promoted to detective. The expectation, he claims, was set by Chief Thomas Cummings, who said he would be promoted to detective after the 18 months — in the department, any officer who serves 18 months in an investigative role is automatically promoted to detective.

“During this time, I started and completed Basic Criminal Investigation ... school during the first week of March 2017,” Mr. Proctor said in the notice of claim. “On my first day of B.C.I., Detective Sergeant Herman Lamison called me and congratulated me, stating that I was going to be promoted to detective. Detective Sergeant Herman Lamison had received this information from Chief Cummings in a supervisors meeting.”

Mr. Proctor said just before reaching 18 months, the chief removed him from the drug task force, which eliminated the possibility of being automatically promoted to detective.

Out of the 32 to 33 employees on the Village Police force, three are African-American, according to Mr. Proctor, and of the five detectives, two have been promoted to detective within the past two years — both of whom are white.

Mr. Proctor said in the claim that those two officers who were promoted to detective had negative employment histories within the department, and that Chief Cummings was worried that one would file a suit against the department if she was not promoted to detective. He also claimed both of the promoted detectives had made fewer arrests than he did as a police officer.

“While I firmly believe the Southampton Village Police Department and the Village of Southampton is engaging in discriminatory actions against me by refusing to give me a promotion as a consequence of my race and color, I have still continued to act as a professional and perform my tasks with due diligence and dedication,” he said.

Mr. Proctor claimed the department’s failure to promote him caused him financial loss, embarrassment and humiliation.

Det. Sgt. Lamison also filed a lawsuit against the village and department in 2006, claiming he was not promoted because he was black. He also claimed that then Village Trustee Harald Steudte privately accused him of selling drugs.

Ultimately, the Village Board settled the discrimination suit with Det. Sgt. Lamison for \$25,000.

Mr. Proctor’s attorney, Ms. Proaño, declined to comment on the notice of claim, as did Southampton Village Administrator Russell Kratoville, who said he could not comment on pending litigation. Chief Cummings did not immediately respond to a request for comment.