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White dispatchers claim reverse racism

By JOE D'AQUILA , Staff Writer

TRENTON - Several white city police dispatchers are gearing up for a lawsuit against the city, claiming that they are the victims of reverse discrimination and have been treated unfairly in comparison to their black co-workers.

The suit outlining the group's complaints has been sent to the Mercer County Civil Court, but as of yesterday it had yet to be filed.

David Zatuchni, the attorney representing the plaintiff group, said he expects the complaint will be officially filed sometime today.

Zatuchni, who is based in Princeton and specializes in workplace discrimination cases, said his clients are eight employees of the city police department's radio room, made up of both dispatchers and supervisors.

The attorney said the complaint outlines his clients' contentions that they've been the target of discrimination because they are white.

Named as defendants in the suit are the City of Trenton, the Trenton Police Department, Director of Police Communications Irving Bradley and Talea Woods, a supervisor working under Bradley.

Police spokesman Detective Sgt. Pedro Medina said Police Director Joe Santiago wasn't aware of the suit yesterday and that he had no comment on its contents. A phone call to Bradley was not immediately returned last night.

Zatuchni said his clients claim that the prejudicial treatment against them began about a year ago, when Bradley was installed as the radio room boss

"The complaint alleges a racist agenda by defendant Bradley to essentially reduce the ranks of white dispatchers and supervisors to make room for African-Americans," Zatuchni said.

Bradley has already been under fire since his hiring last year. Critics have questioned his residency status, pointed out that he is not qualified for the job based on state criteria, and have said his position is largely unnecessary, as the same duties were carried out in the past by a police lieutenant working in a part-time capacity.

Zatuchni said his clients' complaint alleges that Bradley and Woods targeted the group of white dispatchers through disciplinary actions taken based on false offenses, through a level of hyper-scrutiny, and in the institution of disruptive involuntary shift changes made for the targeted individuals.

The complaint also details claims that requests for shift changes were ignored for some of the plaintiffs, while those receiving preferential treatment were granted favorable schedules despite a lack of seniority, and in at least one case, a promotion went to an African-American worker with less seniority than one of the Caucasian plaintiffs.

Further details of the case should be available in the coming days as the full complaint is made public following its filing in court.

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