

# The Boston Globe

## Officer wins \$165,000 in suit against Stoughton

By Jenna Nierstedt, Globe Correspondent | February 3, 2009

A Stoughton supervisor of detectives who was removed from his post in 2005 won a federal lawsuit against the town yesterday after claiming his demotion was retaliation for participation in the investigation of police misconduct involving an officer and former chief Manuel Cachopa.

Robert Welch was awarded \$165,000, plus interest and attorneys' fees, from a jury in state District Court on the grounds that former Acting Police Chief Christopher Ciampa removed Welch from his position because he had investigated a 2002 extortion case involving Cachopa and former police sergeant David M. Cohen.

"He was assigned . . . to assist the special prosecutor in the grand jury investigation," said Welch's attorney, Hillary Schwab of Boston, about Welch's duties investigating the police case. "He served subpoenas and interviewed witnesses. It was not an assignment he wanted. Nobody wants to have to investigate police officers in their own department."

Judge Patti Saris has the option to reinstate Welch as a supervisor.

Stephen Pfaff, the Boston attorney who represented Ciampa, last night said, "We're not happy with the decision but we respect the jury's verdict. [We] don't know where we're going to go with this at this time," he said of any possible appeal.

Board of Selectmen chairman John Kowalczyk and Town Manager Mark Stankiewicz did not return calls for comment.

In his suit, Welch also asserted that he was demoted because he refused to publicly support a petition to recall two of the five selectmen responsible for removing Cachopa from his position. Selectmen Robert Mullen Jr. and Gerald Goulston lost their seats in the recall; two others were installed who supported the reinstatement of Cachopa.

On June 28, 2005, Ciampa informed Welch that he was not going to be reappointed to the supervisor position, according to court papers from the suit.

In 2007, Cohen was convicted of witness intimidation, attempted extortion, and filing a false report after a Canton businessman Timothy Hills filed a complaint against him. He is serving a three-year prison sentence.

Cachopa was convicted Jan. 23 of this year of being an accessory to attempted extortion. Prosecutors said he used his authority as chief to threaten Hills to drop a complaint of misconduct against Cohen. His sentencing is set for this month.

"Mr. Welch has been waiting for this for a long time," Schwab said. "We're so happy he was vindicated. What the defendants did to him was just wrong."

Welch first starting working for the Stoughton Police Department in 1987. He was head of the detectives unit from July 2000 to June 2005. ■