



PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT INFORMATION:

Angela L. Hammer
Assistant City Attorney

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Phone: 815-987-5540

E-mail: angela.hammer@rockfordil.gov

Federal Jury Rules in Favor of Rockford Police Officers

***A FEDERAL JURY RULED THAT TWO ROCKFORD POLICE OFFICERS WERE NOT
LIABLE ON PLAINTIFF'S CLAIMS OF EXCESSIVE FORCE***

ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS. The City of Rockford Department of Law announced today that a federal jury exonerated Rockford Police Officers Erik Freese and Apostolos (Paul) Sarantopoulos of claims of the use of excessive force.

Plaintiff, Joe Sebright, Jr. had claimed that he was unlawfully beaten and body slammed by officers and was eventually struck by a department issued TASER. The jury flatly rejected Plaintiff's claims of excessive force. The jury found that the officers' use of physical force against Sebright, and the officers' use of the TASER was reasonable and justified under the circumstances.

Officers Freese and Sarantopoulos reported to the scene of an alleged domestic disturbance in Rockford on May 14, 2008. Officers were attempting to interview subjects inside a residence. During the interviews of witnesses at the scene, Sebright battered Officer Freese by attempting to push Freese outside the residence. Officer Freese attempted to arrest Sebright. Sebright resisted arrest and was eventually subdued by the TASER of Officer Sarantopoulos.

Assistant City Attorney Angela L. Hammer, lead trial counsel for the officers, stated "I am extremely pleased with the jury's verdict. It is comforting to note that the jurors in this case recognized that police officers are often confronted with difficult situations when investigating allegations of domestic violence. Officers have to react quickly to protect persons at the scene of the occurrence and protect themselves. In this situation, the Plaintiff resisted and obstructed officers' attempts to investigate an incident of potential violence, and resisted arrest. The officers used only that force which was necessary to regain control of the Plaintiff and protect their own safety. They did an excellent job at the scene."

Plaintiff's lawsuit was filed in 2008. The case was tried before a federal jury by the Honorable Frederick J. Kapala from November 18 to November 20th. Sebright asked the jury for an amount in excess of three million dollars (\$3,000,000.00). The jury rejected both Sebright's version of events and his claim for damages. For additional details in the case, refer to case number 2010 CV 5002.

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