

Andoh files civil rights lawsuit against South Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

A civil rights lawsuit has been filed in federal court against South Lake Tahoe, the city police department and Officer Russell Liles.

John Andoh, former transit administrator for South Tahoe Area Transportation Agency, in documents filed Aug. 2 in U.S. District Court in Sacramento alleges he has been racially discriminated against.



John Andoh

According to the city's website, in 2008 there were 164 black people in town accounting for 0.7 percent of the population.

Andoh at that time would have been one of those black people.

The defendants in the case had not been served as of Aug. 4. City Attorney Pat Enright told *Lake Tahoe News* on Wednesday night he was not aware of the lawsuit.

A series of events, mostly in 2009, led to Andoh seeking legal counsel and the lawsuit being filed.

It was fairly well known Andoh had a brief relationship with Allyson Ritchie, a subordinate. Ritchie was hired to do clerical work. She is white.

The suit says, "During the relationship, Ms. Ritchie advised plaintiff that she had a brother (Andrew Eissinger) who was a police officer of the city of South Lake Tahoe and that this individual would become enraged should he discover that Ms. Ritchie was involved in an interracial relationship."

According to the document, the relationship ended in May 2009. When Ritchie's position was eliminated two months later, the reason given was budget cuts. The document says she disputed that and alleged it had to do with breaking up with Andoh.

Less than a week after Ritchie was let go, Andoh was involved in a vehicle accident with a cyclist. Officer Liles, who was hired as a rookie in summer 2008, took the report.

Soon thereafter an arrest warrant was issued for Andoh for allegedly giving false information to an officer. That charge was eventually dropped, but not before Andoh's name was muddied in headlines and with his bosses at STATA.

"We are not limited to the theory about the girlfriend and brother. The arrest itself was unfounded," Jeffrey D. Fulton, Andoh's attorney, said.

The lawsuit questions why Andoh's job was eliminated earlier this year.

The four claims in the lawsuit in large part deal with the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments and subsequent Civil Rights legislation.

No specific dollar amount is being asked for in the damages. Fulton said his client is willing to let a jury come up with a figure.

A status conference has been scheduled for Oct. 25 in Sacramento.