

# SLT pays ex-employee in multi-layered lawsuit

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe has agreed to pay Leigh-Ellen Yarbrough \$49,500 in what it calls a breach of contract case.

Her attorney says it was much more than that.

City Attorney Tom Watson said he had little to do with the case because it was handled by outside counsel and he was new to the city as the lawsuit was wrapping up.

While the council agreed to settle in November, the formal vote on the settlement was not taken until last month in closed session.

Several charges against the city were alleged in the lawsuit.

According to Jacqueline Mittelstadt, Yarbrough's attorney, it all started when Yarbrough called 911 from the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena to report a sex offender being near children. Yarbrough was a temporary part-time employee at the rink when it was still operated by the city and had a contract with the city to be an independent coach.

That wasn't the first time Yarbrough had warned authorities about the sex offender's presence.

The sex offender's wife was a member of the city's Parks and Recreation Commission and said it was fine for him to be there because their daughter was skating.

Shortly thereafter Yarbrough was banned from the arena. And in the settlement agreement she is banned for the next three years.

During this time she lost her job, so part of the suit had to do with being wrongfully terminated.

“You can’t fire someone for whistle blowing,” Mittelstadt said.

The sex offender ultimately went to prison and the rec commissioner resigned.

“The community of South Lake Tahoe should be giving her a medal. For all we know she helped avert another Jaycee Lee Dugard situation,” Mittelstadt told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Mittelstadt said the most egregious part of the whole issue is “this is what every citizen should be doing to protect our children ... calling 911 to protect our children. Nepotism and politics slammed this person.”

The city’s insurance company is footing the bill, according to Watson.