

Former police Chief Frank Straub files \$4 million claim against city, alleges wrongful termination

Nick Deshais/SR

Former Spokane Police Chief Frank Straub filed a \$4 million claim against the city Thursday for wrongful termination.

Straub was forced to resign late last month following complaints about his leadership style. His sudden ouster followed months of rumors about his explosive behavior, as well as reports about personnel moves involving two women who were transferred out of the police department.

In his claim, Straub denies that he resigned. The letter from his attorney, Mary Schultz, states again and again that Straub was “fired.”

“You fired Chief Straub,” the letter states. “His termination was already fact. . . . You had already buried him as the police chief.”

The letter states that on Monday, Sept. 21, city Administrator Theresa Sanders texted Straub at 6:39 a.m. and told him to “report to the Mayor for a 7:00 a.m. ‘meeting’ of unannounced content.”

At that meeting, Straub was told of his termination, the letter says. He asked for an investigation into the reasons for his termination, and was denied.

The following day, Straub was shown a press release announcing his removal. Straub fought against the move, but by 3:51 p.m., he was “unable to obtain any retraction of the disparaging information,” the letter says, adding that the city was “bludgeoning” with the press release.

At 4:07 p.m., city officials texted Straub and told him the press release would be sent out “in five minutes.”

“Frank Straub was fired,” the letter states. “He was removed from the City website, and Rick Dobrow was out doing interviews as the new police chief before Frank was even able to turn in his badge.”

As Straub’s lawyer, Schultz was told by the city that the ousted chief has no civil service protections, and can be fired at will. Schultz demanded proof of Straub’s alleged explosive behavior, but was rebuffed.

“From both a legal and a plain common sense perspective, what those letters should have triggered was not a need to fire the Chief; what they should have triggered was the need for your Department to find out who was promoting mutiny in that police department and why.”