

## **Twp. settles for \$600G in police suit**

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West Deptford Township has agreed to pay \$600,000 to a woman whose leg was allegedly broken by a township police officer during a 2003 drug raid at the Red Bank Run Apartments.

The settlement resolves a suit the woman, Nekiesha Williams, filed April 1, 2005, in federal court.

In the suit, Williams alleged that township police violated her Fourth Amendment rights to be free from excessive force during a seizure and to be free from false arrest and imprisonment.

According to court documents, the township agreed to the settlement "for reasons other than the merits of (Williams's) claims, including to avoid the cost of litigation and that defendant specifically denies any liability to (Williams) or any other person." The township agreed to pay Williams the \$600,000 in exchange for the suit being dismissed.

Municipal Solicitor Michael Angelini said the township's insurance company handled the suit, so he knew little about the case.

"It was a decision by the insurance carrier that they thought it advisable to resolve (the suit) rather than spend money on defense costs," Angelini said.

According to an opinion issued by U.S. District Judge Robert Kugler, police officers were executing two search warrants on Aug. 6, 2003, related to suspected drug activity at the apartment complex.

Williams testified that when she attempted to procure her then-five-year-old daughter from one of the apartments being searched, three officers grabbed her by the arms and waist and told her she was under arrest for obstruction, according to court documents.

The three officers then proceeded to lift Williams who is 5-feet, 5-inches tall and weighs 180 pounds into the air and slam her onto the ground, according to the opinion document. The impact with the ground broke Williams's femur.

Williams was charged with aggravated assault, simple assault, obstructing administration of law and resisting arrest as a result of the encounter. She entered the Pretrial Intervention Program on March 15, 2005, and the indictment was resolved when she successfully completed the program in December 2005.

In his written opinion, Kugler said the facts Williams presented were sufficient to support a trial.

Attempts to get further comment Ñ from attorneys representing the township or township officials Ñ were unsuccessful.

King & King, the Woodbury law firm representing Williams, did not return a call for comment.