

NEWS > CRIME & PUBLIC SAFETY

City, police department settle Arlt suit for \$1.6M

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SANTA CRUZ — The city reached a \$1.6 million settlement to resolve a suit by relatives of Sean Arlt, whom police shot and killed in the Westside while investigating a disturbance call more than two years ago.

The settlement drops claims of liability against the city and Santa Cruz Police Department in the deadly officer-involved shooting Oct. 16, 2016, after police were called to the home at the 200 block of Chace Street regarding a man “pounding” on a man’s front door, [authorities](#) have said. The city announced the settlement Monday afternoon.

“The city’s decision to settle the Arlt lawsuit is, in no way, a criticism of the officers involved, nor should it reflect adversely on their dedication and professionalism,” police spokeswoman Joyce Bloschke said.

The other officers also acted appropriately at the scene, Blaschke said.

Officers have reported that Arlt tried to attack them with a rake and refused repeated orders to discard the tool.

Arlt, 32, was shot about 3:30 a.m. after [authorities](#) said he was causing a disturbance at the home of an acquaintance, pounding on the door and making threats.

The Arlt family filed suit in U.S. District Court in April 2017 in opposition to an apparent “code of silence” in the investigation of the deadly officer-involved shooting.

The [claim](#) called for release of evidence, asserted claims of wrongful death and sought damages from Santa Cruz Police Department’s involved officers.

Oakland attorney Michael Haddad, representing the family, said the suit also was intended to prevent unlawful lethal force by Santa Cruz Police Department.

Haddad previously said the federal courts were the sole avenue by which the Arlt family could receive evidence in the case. The complaint alleged police officers placed themselves in a position of avoidable danger.

Santa Cruz County District Attorney Jeff Rosell in February 2017 confirmed that charges will not be filed against the police department.

“This settlement reflects our desire for the Arlt family, the city and community to progress forward,” Mayor David Terrazas said. “We know that the City of Santa Cruz, its police department and its residents will continue to seek comprehensive collaboration, for solutions to address our concerns over the mental health crisis.”

City Manager Martín Bernal said the settlement was “fiscally responsible when compared to the financial realities and risks of proceeding to trial.”

Police Chief Andy Mills, who was not employed by the police department during the shooting, said officers were compelled to take immediate action in a dangerous situation.

“It was a tragedy for Mr. Arlt’s family, the community and our officers,” Mills said. “As a department, we view the protection of human life as our highest priority. We can always do more and are consistently looking for better options to prevent the

Arlt’s was one of two officer-involved shootings turned deadly in 2016. Luke Smith, 15, was shot and killed by officers responding to reports of a stabbing and a fleeing suspect in Corralitos on Nov. 19, 2016.

Smith’s family also filed [suit](#) — against six defendants, Santa Cruz County, Capitola, the Santa Cruz County sheriff and a deputy, the Capitola police chief and a police officer — claiming the boy’s civil and constitutional rights were violated when a deputy shot and killed him last year on a Corralitos roadside. The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in San Jose, alleges that officers lacked training to prevent unreasonable deadly force.

In reference to the Arlt case, Mills said Santa Cruz Police Department continues to improve strategies for officers confronting cases of substance abuse or mental crises.

The \$1.6 million settlement in the Arlt case is pending approval by the city’s insurance carrier.

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