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City resolves cop shooting case for \$4.5M

Five children of man, killed by officers in 2007, to get payment

BY JAMIE LOO

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The city of Chicago has reached a \$4.5 million settlement with the family of a man killed by police after being shot 18 times.

The settlement was approved by the city council on Wednesday and will be entered into Cook County Circuit Court today for approval by Circuit Judge Lorna E. Prokes.

Freddie Latrice Wilson, 34, was pulled over by police officers for a broken headlight about 10:30 p.m. Nov. 13, 2007, near the 5400 block of West Madison Street in the Austin neighborhood.

Officers Tomislav Vidljinevic and Jason Santiago approached the vehicle, according to court documents, and a few minutes later, another Chicago police vehicle arrived with two more officers, including Guadalupe Deleon.

A short time later, Vidljinevic, Santiago and Deleon opened fire on Wilson, who was still seated in his car.

"Freddie was shot (at) 24

times and struck 18 times," said Antonio M. Romanucci, a partner at Romanucci & Blandin LLC who represented Wilson's family in the case.

The police officers claimed that Wilson had reached behind his back, pulled out a black handgun and pointed it at them, according to court documents. Witnesses who were above ground in a nearby apartment building said they did not see the gun and that Wilson was unarmed.

A black handgun was found at the crime scene, Romanucci said, and forensic testing showed the gun had no grass or dirt on it, and Wilson's blood or fingerprints were absent.

The wrongful-death lawsuit requested judgment against the officers for using deadly force against Wilson when he posed no threat. It also alleged that the officers engaged in a civil conspiracy to cover up the fact that Wilson was unarmed by planting a gun at the scene to support their defense of the shooting.

Romanucci said his clients "have a tremendous sense of relief" that the suit is over and believe the settlement is an acknowledgment the officers made a critical mistake in shooting and killing Wilson.

City Law Department spokesman Roderick Drew said



Antonio M. Romanucci

in a statement that the city moved to settle the case because the physical evidence at the scene contradicted officers' testimony of Wilson pointing the gun at officers and holding onto it until he fell to the ground outside of his car.

The original lawsuit requested \$25 million, he said, which likely would've been presented to a jury if taken to trial.

"Therefore, the settlement of \$4.5 million, inclusive of all fees and costs, is a cost-effective measure to limit the city's potential financial exposure and resolves all claims," Drew said.

Drew said no disciplinary action was taken by the police department against the officers

named in the lawsuit, and all three are still on active duty.

"The Independent Police Review Authority reviews the litigation record after settlement and we expect they will do so in this instance," he said.

Wilson was living with his girlfriend and one of his children at the time of his death. He had a troubled life and was incarcerated several times, Romanucci said, including one sentence for armed robbery.

After he left prison, Wilson became a rapper named The Saint, discussing the dangers of criminal life on the streets in his music and encouraging young adults to stay away from such a lifestyle.

The settlement proceeds will go to Wilson's five children, who range in age from 7 to 19.

"They will all get the education that they need," Romanucci said. "They will get a legacy from their father knowing he did not die in vain."

The city was represented by Matthew A. Hurd and Arlene E. Martin of the city's Law Department.

The case is *Private Bank & Trust Co. as Independent Administrator of the Estate of Freddie Latrice Wilson, deceased v. City of Chicago, Officer Jason Santiago, Officer Tomislav Vidljinevic and Officer Guadalupe Deleon*, No. 08 L 012698.