

Sexual harassment settlement costs Riverside County \$490,000

January 30, 2013

Riverside County will pay almost a half million dollars to settle a sexual harassment suit that named a former top health official, a lawyer for the plaintiff said this week.

County spokesman Ray Smith confirmed the \$490,000 amount, saying the settlement was approved by the Board of Supervisors late last year.

The deal settles a lawsuit brought against the county in 2011 by Pamela Luna, who formerly worked as interim administrator of health and community programs for First 5 Riverside.

First 5 Riverside is an agency that funds programs promoting the development of young children up to age 5. Luna worked there from May 2010 to August 2011.

During her employment with the agency, Luna was the target of "unwanted and inappropriate advances" from Dr. Eric Frykman, said [San Diego lawyer Joshua D. Gruenberg](#), who represented Luna.

"In addition to verbally harassing Dr. Luna, Dr. Frykman repeatedly and openly ogled her, and touched her without her consent," Gruenberg stated in a news release. "Attempts to investigate and resolve the harassment were not taken seriously at any level of the county's chain of command, leaving Ms. Luna twisting in the wind until she was terminated in retaliation for her complaints."

At the time, Frykman was serving as Riverside County's public health officer and Community Health Agency director. Frykman resigned the post in September 2011, and a short time later Cameron Kaiser was selected as the interim health officer.

Frykman did not immediately return a telephone call placed to his Riverside-area medical office Wednesday seeking comment.

Upon her termination, Luna sued the county, Frykman and other county employees, alleging unlawful harassment and retaliation, Gruenberg said. She sought damages for emotional and physical trauma, loss of economic opportunity and loss of reputation.

According to Smith, an internal county investigation and independent review by a consultant in 2011 found nothing to substantiate the claims.

On Tuesday, Smith said, "For various reasons, the county believes this was the best resolution of the case."

Smith said the board approved the settlement on Nov. 6.

"It required signatures from the other parties," he said. "And it was finally signed by everyone who was required to sign off on the settlement Nov. 26."

Original article: <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-sexual-harassment-settlement-riverside-2013jan16-story.html>