

Novato hammered with a \$900,000 settlement

Corey Pride

Marinscope

A former Novato teacher will be paid more than \$900,000 by the Novato Unified School District, the city of Novato and Novato Community Television as part of a settlement deal involving lawsuits he filed against the three entities, alleging defamation, civil rights violations and withholding of retirement funds.

The defendants in the suit released a joint statement saying the matter has been resolved "to the satisfaction of all parties."

Novato resident and teacher Rick Tucker was the manager of Novato Community Television from 2000 until his termination in 2013. The station gets work space and bookkeeping support from the school district and its board includes a City Council appointee.

Tucker was fired after the station reported financial irregularities and suspended its operations. Tucker subsequently filed a lawsuit claiming he was defamed by former Novato Unified School District Superintendent Shalee Cunningham. In the suit, Tucker alleges officials defamed him by making negative remarks about his management skills and Cunningham saying he brought a loaded gun on school district property. Novato police had investigated the gun allegation and determined there was no evidence of a crime. Tucker told police the gun was a replica keepsake he had recently inherited and that he took it out of his car to show a coworker, according to court documents.