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FOR INFORMATION CALL

May 9, 2005

Ald. Mike McGee, Jr.
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Federal Class Action Lawsuit Filed Against City, Police Department

Plaintiffs Include Frank Jude, Jr. and Iraq War Veteran Charles Griffin; Alleges Specific Instances of Civil Rights Violations and “Systematic Pattern” of Violations and Abuse By Officers

A class action lawsuit was filed this morning in federal court against the City of Milwaukee, Police Chief Nannette Hegerty and the Milwaukee Police Department, the Milwaukee Police Association and individual but unnamed police officers by individuals who claim their constitutional rights were violated by police officers.

Filed just after 11 a.m. today in the United States District Court – Eastern District of Wisconsin by Doris Jude Porter on behalf of the Justice for Jude, Justice for All Committee, the lawsuit alleges a lengthy list of violations and misconduct on the part of Milwaukee police officers, including a “pattern of conduct” consisting of racially motivated misconduct, use of excessive force, assault and battery, warrant less searches, use of excessive force while restrained, negligence, denial of medical attention, strip search and body cavity examinations, denial of constitutional rights, and failure to investigate, to name just a few.

The lawsuit also states that supervisors knew about the alleged abuses and violations yet did not intervene to stop them and “commended” some of the actions “by failure to discipline.” Furthermore, referring to the incidents of abuse and/or misconduct, it states that the police department failed to supervise its officers, failed to train subordinates, failed to enforce its policies and/or customs, that it has inadequate training and hiring procedures, and that it was negligent in training and supervising officers.

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Federal Class Action Lawsuit/ADD ONE

In a related development, Ald. Mike McGee, Jr. issued a letter to the U.S. Justice Department requesting a formal investigation into the “patterns and practices” of the MPD and the Fire and Police Commission regarding discipline for officer misconduct, training and use of force. In his letter Ald. McGee cites several areas where he contends the MPD and/or the Fire and Police Commission are deficient in dealing with citizen complaints and officer discipline.

“You will find that the City of Milwaukee has failed to establish a procedure whereby all civilian complaints are documented, and are investigated and adjudicated adequately,” he states in the letter. “The City of Milwaukee has failed to investigate adequately civilian complaints and other allegations of police misconduct.”

The deficiencies in training, supervising and disciplining officers “foster and perpetuate officer misconduct,” and inadequate investigations and inquiries into official citizen complaints of officer misconduct result in little or no deterrent effect on officers because they know they will not likely be discovered or disciplined, Ald. McGee states.

Frank Jude, Jr. – the nephew of Doris Jude Porter – and Charles Griffin, plaintiffs in the class action lawsuit, both allege beatings at the hands of Milwaukee police officers. In October 2004, Jude was allegedly beaten by off-duty officers outside a Bay View house party and was hospitalized with severe facial injuries. He claims officers disrobed him, put a gun to his head and used racial slurs during the beating. Four officers have been charged in connection with the Jude beating and more than a dozen officers have either been suspended or face discipline.

Griffin, a U.S. Army soldier, claims he was beaten by Milwaukee officers during an altercation in July 2004 while he was home on leave from Iraq.