

Woman seeking \$5 million from city

Officer fondled her, she charges

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LAUDERHILL — Though his past was clouded with allegations of sexual harassment at the Hollywood Police Department, Lauderhill police decided to give Darrell Walker a chance to prove he was a good officer.

That chance came to an end a year ago, when he was accused of fondling a woman he had stopped on Commercial Boulevard.

Now the woman's attorney

wants to settle for \$5 million or else sue the city.

"We feel it's an appropriate number for the actions that took place," said attorney Bradford Cohen of Fort Lauderdale. He said city administrators hired Walker despite "the knowledge they had regarding the officer's alleged tendencies."

The settlement offer, dated March 3, was sent to the city's insurance carrier, Gallagher Bassett Services Inc.

City Attorney Earl Hall said Cohen's letter to Gallagher is standard legal procedure when a municipality is the target of a possible lawsuit. He said Gallagher will "evaluate the claim for its merit"

and offer a settlement or head to court.

A municipality must be given a formal notice of a claim before a lawsuit is filed. The city has six months in which to either agree to a settlement or take on litigation.

Cohen's claim is not the only one the city may have to pay for Walker's alleged misconduct.

Attorney Pamela Terranova advised the city last year she will be making a claim against the city or possibly filing a lawsuit for damages her clients sustained, allegedly at the hands of Walker.

In that incident, which police said occurred on Dec. 26, 1999, Walker allegedly fondled a woman and her two daughters, one un-

der 12 and the other under 16, while he responded to a police call at Northwest 27th Court.

Walker, 38, was charged last year with three counts of committing lewd and lascivious acts, molestation, and two counts of simple battery. For the incident reported on Commercial Boulevard, he was charged with two counts of simple battery and released on \$8,500 bail. That case is pending.

Walker was hired by Lauderhill police in April 1997, less than a year after he was fired by Hollywood for allegedly making "inappropriate" remarks to a group of female police recruits. The criminal case is still pending.