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## TENNIE PIERCE GETS \$1.43 MILLION

Actual cost to taxpayers is higher than last November's controversial deal

BY CHRISTINE PELISEK

Friday, September 21, 2007 - 6:00 pm

**CITY ATTORNEY ROCKY DELGADILLO** opted against trial today and settled the lawsuit filed by black firefighter Tennie Pierce for \$1.43 million, with Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and city council members signing off on the agreement hours after the council meeting was finished and no apparent action had been taken.

"Today's agreement is the best possible outcome for the taxpayers," said the mayor in a press statement. "It reduces the original settlement by nearly half, while protecting Angelenos from further liability." But in fact, with City Hall already paying outside lawyers to prepare to fight Pierce in court, the total price to taxpayers is slightly higher than last November's proposed settlement, by roughly \$100,000.

Pierce had sued, claiming racial harassment among other things, after a colleague slipped dog food into his spaghetti following a volleyball game in which Pierce repeatedly joked "Feed the big dog!" in reference to himself. An *L.A. Weekly* investigation found no evidence of a racial component, racial comments or other racial undercurrents surrounding the prank.

Noticeably absent from the City Council meeting today was Council Member Dennis Zine, who was strongly opposed to any settlement offers. Zine had told the *L.A. Weekly*, "The truth of the matter is Pierce is a prankster and a hazer and doesn't deserve anything on this case."

The announcement set off immediate debate. City Council President Eric Garcetti promptly took credit for helping broker the deal, which he praised. But an attorney representing Pierce's two Fire Department supervisors, who were disciplined for allegedly failing to fully investigate the prank against Pierce by a Latino co-worker after Pierce taunted him during the volleyball game, told KFI radio in disgust: "There was no racial component; it was entirely made up."

Pierce filed a lawsuit in 2005 alleging that he was fed dog food by his co-workers at Los Angeles city Fire Station 5. Last fall, the City Council agreed to pay Pierce \$2.7 million in public funds, but the controversial settlement was scuttled after photos emerged showing Pierce spraying water into the face of one strapped-down firefighter, smearing shaving cream around the groin area of another strapped-down firefighter, and gleefully laughing at a third who had been wrapped in a bed sheet on which hazers had scrawled, "Oy Vey! I'm Gay!"

Pierce's lawsuit had been scheduled for trial on September 24. Instead, a statement was released by Los Angeles City Clerk Frank Martinez at 4:30 p.m. today stating that Pierce will receive an additional \$60,000 to resolve claims for back pay. The deal will also make him eligible for his 20-year pension, which is estimated at roughly another \$1 million. As part of the settlement, Pierce will resign from the department and not file any further claims against the city. The City Attorney's Office has already spent \$1.35 million defending the case.

By contrast, City Council voted on September 19 to pay \$1.15 million to the family of a 26-year-old Glendale motorcyclist who died when he was struck by a car driven by a Los Angeles city employee.

### MAYOR VILLARAIGOSA STATEMENT ON SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

MAYOR ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA  
City of Los Angeles

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 21, 2007

LOS ANGELES - Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa issued the following statement today

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#### DEADLINE HOLLYWOOD DAILY

'IT'S A STRIKE, NOT PROHIBITION': WGA PARTY  
Fri, Nov 9, 8:39 pm

#### LA DAILY

SIGNING ON: MASSIVE WGA STRIKE AT FOX PLAZA  
Fri, Nov 9, 5:35 pm

#### CATCH OF THE DAY

I'M OJ, YOU'RE OJ  
Fri, Nov 9, 10:06 am

#### STYLE COUNCIL

CAT SCRATCH FEVER  
Wed, Nov 7, 1:20 pm

#### PLAY

ARCHITECTURE IN HELSINKI, TROUBADOUR, 11/6  
Wed, Nov 7, 8:35 am

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regarding the settlement agreement in the case of Tennie Pierce v. City of Los Angeles:

"Today's agreement is the best possible outcome for the taxpayers. It reduces the original settlement by nearly half, while protecting Angelenos from further liability."

**Also read:**

[PAYOUT FOR DOG FOOD PRANK?](#) Rumors swirl that Delgadillo's office will settle with firefighter Tennie Pierce - September 10, 2007

[TENNIE PIERCE VERSUS TAXPAYERS](#) A firefighter tricked into eating dog food now claims he's a victim of retaliation - June 6, 2007

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on Nov. 10.



**PAPER MAGAZINE INVADES L.A.**

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**ART BRUT AND THE HOLD STEADY AT THE FONDA**

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Thu, Nov 8, 11:00 am  
Stylish throngs with dough pour into the area. So do muggers and killers

**THEATER MURDER MYSTERY BY STEVEN LEIGH MORRIS**

Thu, Nov 8, 8:00 am  
After portraying Bobby Seale, actor Darius Ever Truly dies in a baffling street attack

**AIR INFERIORITY BY PATRICK RANGE MCDONALD, CHRISTINE PELISEK AND JILL STEWART**

Wed, Oct 31, 6:00 pm  
Is "Run!" the new strategy against firestorms on California's urban fringe?

**WGA'S BIGGEST ENEMY BY D. HEIMPEL**

Wed, Oct 24, 6:00 pm  
A fed up writers' union hopes to appeal to a sense of fair play. In Hollywood

**BIKE DISLIKE BY JORGE CASUSO**

Wed, Oct 24, 6:00 pm  
Laid-back Santa Monica clashes with Critical Mass

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**MORE BY CHRISTINE PELISEK**

**THE CASE OF THE DOGGED DETECTIVES**

Wed, Oct 17, 12:00 pm  
Two hard-boiled murder investigators get their man — a fellow cop — 16 years later

**BEST YOGURT FOR YOUR HEALTH**

Wed, Oct 3, 12:00 pm  
Real. Raw. Live.

**FORMER DEPUTY GETS LIFE IN PRISON**

Wed, Sep 19, 6:40 pm  
John Racz insists his missing wife was on a 16-year vacation

**PAYOUT FOR DOG FOOD PRANK?**

Mon, Sep 10, 3:00 pm  
Rumors swirl that Delgadillo's office will settle with firefighter Tennie Pierce

**JUSTICE FOR THE SNOW-CONE MAN**

Wed, Aug 29, 5:00 pm  
His female killer blames witchcraft and brujas, but the jury calls it murder

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