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## The *Ex's* hit man strikes again

Not only is columnist Frank Gallagher's latest campaign nasty, but it's also bogus

By A.C. Thompson

*San Francisco Examiner* columnist Frank Gallagher gets paid to pummel lefties, so his recent screeds regarding activist and campaign consultant Robert Haaland aren't exactly surprising.

Still, they're annoying – and bunk.

Gallagher is all worked up over what he contends is a plot by Sup. Tom Ammiano to "pay off" Haaland, a female-to-male transgender, who several years ago sued the city alleging police misconduct. The long-running case reached its apparent conclusion Jan. 27 when Ammiano and six other supes voted to approve a \$107,000 settlement for Haaland, who has worked on Ammiano's campaigns. According to Gallagher, the settlement (which still needs to be OK'd by Mayor Willie Brown) constitutes a "conflict of interest" on the part of Ammiano and a waste of "hard-earned taxpayer dollars" for the rest of us.

Sure, Ammiano probably should have recused himself from the vote. But the real story here is what happened to Haaland – and how the San Francisco Police Department failed to investigate serious charges against one of its own.

Haaland claims he was seriously mistreated by a male police officer after being arrested in a symbolic housing takeover in 1999. The cop, an officer based at Park Station, "got me to partially disrobe and started groping my genitals," Haaland told the *Bay Guardian*. "It was clearly not about searching me; it was about groping my genitals."

While Gallagher calls the charges "dubious," there is at least some merit to the allegations. The officer's name and badge number are laid out in court depositions, and two witnesses put the cop and Haaland in the same room at the same time. Plus, by the time City Attorney Dennis Herrera agreed to settle two months ago, the suit had already cleared several evidentiary hurdles and was slated to go to trial. In other words, it can't have been entirely "dubious."

Several sources familiar with the case say the city was wise to pay up.

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If this had been a street crime, the perpetrator could've been charged with sexual battery and, if convicted, fined \$10,000 and sentenced to four years in state prison. Yet the widely publicized allegations – they've been the subject of at least a half dozen newspaper stories – haven't triggered any action from the SFPD's Management Control Division, a.k.a. Internal Affairs. "This is the first I've heard of it," said one source at Management Control. The problem, according to this source, is that San Francisco isn't in the habit of investigating allegations of misconduct stemming from lawsuits.

Apparently, nobody at the department – the or Office of Citizen Complaints, the police-watchdog agency – has even bothered to question the cops on duty at Park Station when the reported incident occurred.

Department spokesperson Dewayne Tully declined to comment. "We don't comment on civil suits," Tully said.

Haaland's attorney, Oakland-based civil rights lawyer Michael Haddad, criticized the SFPD for failing to follow up on the four-year-old allegations. "The police department is aware of the complaint," Haddad told us. "We do expect the police department to take proper action against this officer – and it's in their hands now."

Police abuse, Haaland says, "is a huge problem in the transgendered community." Evidently, that's not just hyperbole: last year sheriff Michael Hennessey fired a deputy accused of mistreating a tranny inmate; and anti-hate crimes group Community United Against Violence has documented innumerable allegations of antitranny behavior by San Francisco cops.

As for Gallagher, he seems to find the subject of sex offenses against transgenders funny. In a Feb. 3 column, the *Ex* hit man argued that Haaland must have testicles "the size of tennis balls" to ask for compensation for his treatment by the SFPD. When we asked Gallagher to explain his bad taste wisecrack, he gave us a two-word response: "No comment."

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