

Swedesboro and Woolwich pay \$475,000 to settle police brutality claim



by **JOHN PAFF**
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On January 12, 2010, Swedesboro Borough and Woolwich Township (both in Gloucester County) agreed to pay \$475,000 to a Swedesboro woman who had sued Borough and Township police officers for allegedly falsely arresting her and using excessive force against her on January 19, 2002.

In her complaint, Plaintiff Lisa Silver claimed that she was “an occupant of an establishment situated on Kings Highway” in Swedesboro when Woolwich Police Officer Vincent Minnitti and Swedesboro Police Officer Stanley Kemp, who were investigating a report of a public disturbance, asked her and her husband Roy Silver to leave the area. According to the complaint, a verbal altercation ensued between Lisa Silver and the officers that resulted in her arrest for “hindering apprehension and disorderly conduct among other charges.” She alleges that Minnitti, in effecting the arrest, “grabbed her by the neck and threw her to the ground” to handcuff her and “twisted [her] arms behind her back [with] such force . . . that she required shoulder surgery.” She claims that she was later “cleared of all charges” in the Swedesboro Municipal Court.

The Silvers filed suit on January 15, 2004 and claimed violations of constitutional rights, assault and battery and other torts.

The matter is captioned Silver v. Woolwich Township, et al, Civil No. 1:04-cv-00141-JS. The lawsuit and settlement agreement are on-line [here](#). Lisa Silver's attorney was Benson Goldberger, Esq. of Philadelphia and Roy Silver was represented by Alan E. Denenberg of Philadelphia.

None of the Silvers' allegations have been proven or disproven in court. The settlement agreement expressly states that the \$475,000 payment does not constitute an admission of wrongdoing by Swedesboro, Woolwich or any of their officials. All that is known for sure is that defendants and their insurers, for whatever reason, decided that they would rather pay the Silvers \$475,000 than take the matter to trial. Perhaps the defendants' decision to settle was done to save further legal expense and the costs of trying what were in fact exaggerated or meritless claims. Or, perhaps the claims were true and the defendants wanted to avoid being embarrassed at trial. This is the problem when cases settle before trial—it is impossible to know the truth of what really happened.



