

# Alsip cop's suit to go to trial

## Court reverses dismissal of case against village

By Rudolph Bush

Tribune staff reporter

For almost a decade, Alsip police Officer James McGreal has argued in the courts and on the streets that the mayor and two police chiefs tried to have him fired and discredited because he turned up information damaging to the mayor and his associates.

In a lengthy ruling handed down Monday, the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals appeared to bolster McGreal's case, writing that "a full review of the facts casts a pall of suspicion on the Village of Alsip."

The ruling overturned a lower court decision that had dismissed a federal lawsuit filed by McGreal and vindicated the village, Mayor Arnold Andrews, former police Chief Kenneth Wood, current Chief David Snooks and psychologist Eric Ostrov.

Jon Loevy, McGreal's attorney, called the ruling—which remands the case to the lower court for trial—a great victory for his client, who still serves on the force as a patrol officer.

"McGreal has been waiting a long time to clear his name. He is very much looking forward to

trial," Loevy said.

In separate interviews, all four defendants said they were eager for a jury trial and expect to be cleared of McGreal's allegations, including that Wood and Snooks intentionally misplaced police reports about a club owned by a personal friend of Andrews'.

Andrews said he is not concerned about fallout from the appellate ruling. "If you think I'm going to resign over the McGreal thing, you're wrong," the mayor said.

The case centers on McGreal's contention he was singled out for punishment, including lack of promotion, interrogation, and physical and psychological evaluations and administrative review for several reasons. These included, according to McGreal, his unsuccessful bid to replace Andrews in 1997; his public suspicions of corruption in the village and that the Copacabana Club was partly and illegally owned by a convicted felon; and his call for an investigation into possible corruption in connection with illegal gambling at a local Elks Club.

The investigation into the Copacabana, an alleged well-known trouble spot in Alsip operated by George Rusick, a friend of Andrews', drew keen interest from the court, which stated there is "smoking gun" evidence that Wood and Snooks intentionally misplaced police

reports about the club.

The information in those reports came from McGreal and detailed allegations that in 1994 a convicted felon told McGreal he was partners in the club with Rusick.

That allegation was never proven.

The court agreed with McGreal that evidence showed Wood and Snooks misplaced police reports about the allegations.

"[T]he chief knew records were missing from the official files because the evidence shows the chief is the person who removed them," the opinion stated.

Wood said the court's opinion is not accurate and he is confident he will be cleared at trial.

Snooks said the court misunderstood evidence about the reports. That evidence includes an envelope described as the "smoking gun" on which Snooks had written, "Original sups from [Sgt.] John Murray given to me by Chief 11/24/97 at 0920 as he never placed them in records to prevent officer 'digging.'"

"There was no impropriety in the filing of the reports," Snooks said.

If proven at trial, the allegations would lead to a disciplinary inquiry against Snooks, Andrews said.

In March 1998, the village hired Ostrov, a psychologist, to examine McGreal.