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## **Jury Says City Must Pay \$9 Million in Wrongful Conviction Suit**

Aug. 23, 2006  
Munster Times  
By Joe Carlson

HAMMOND | Larry Mayes smiled widely and rocked in his chair Tuesday as a jury ordered the city of Hammond and police Capt. Michael Solan to pay him \$9 million.

Although the award was half as large as Mayes' attorneys had requested, both sides agreed it was still a large verdict for Mayes' 19 years in prison for a rape he did not commit.

"We feel this is a complete vindication of Larry in this case," said John Stainthorp, one of Mayes' attorneys. "We're just happy the jury could see through the lies (the city) presented in this case."

After two weeks of testimony, the jury deliberated for 4 1/2 hours Tuesday before ordering the city and the police captain to pay Mayes a total of \$9 million, plus attorneys' fees that will probably add up to another \$1 million.

"This is just the first step in a long process. We're not ready to write a check and hand it over to Larry Mayes," Hammond Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. said, adding that any payment was at least "a couple years away" because of appeals.

Asked about issues for appeal, McDermott said the city was unfairly barred by U.S. Magistrate Judge Paul Cherry from presenting key evidence against Mayes, such as prior convictions for rape and armed robbery.

Solan showed no reaction to the verdict. McDermott said the police veteran had long planned to retire this year and no disciplinary action is pending against him.

"He's been putting away bad guys for 40 years," McDermott said. "We've never had a problem with Mike Solan."

In 1982, a jury sent Mayes and another man to prison for abducting and raping a Hammond convenience store clerk whose testimony was the only direct evidence linking him to the crimes.

After modern DNA analysis exonerated Mayes of the crime in 2001, the victim revealed for the first time that she had been hypnotized in order to sharpen her memory of the attack.

Among other irregularities, Mayes' attorneys argued the detectives were not properly trained or supervised in 1982, and that widespread practices followed in police departments across the nation did not apply in Hammond.

But the law provides considerable legal latitude for police departments. For Mayes to win his case, he not only had to prove that his rights were violated, but that the department was managed so poorly

that the violations were a direct result of systemic failures.

"It was an extremely high burden, a very difficult case to win," Stainthorp said.

Mayes said he still remembers Solan's taunts 25 years ago, that Mayes would be an old man before he ever saw the outside of a prison wall.

"I just want to let him know: 'How you like me now?'" Mayes said.

Larry Mayes was freed from prison in 2001 after DNA analysis exonerated him of a 1980 rape. He sued the city, saying it hid evidence and mishandled evidence, wrongly sending him to prison.

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