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Weare police settle suit from resident over videotaping officer

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Weare has agreed to settle a federal civil rights lawsuit from a resident who was arrested after videotaping the police during a traffic stop in 2011.

William Alleman received \$35,000 and a written apology from Weare police Chief John Velleca, who took over management of the department in November.

Alleman was arrested in July 2011 after recording Officer Brandon Montplaisir with his mobile phone. A New Hampshire district court judge dismissed the charges.

“We’re very happy with the outcome of these cases,” said Alleman’s attorney, Seth Hipple, in a statement. “Our goal all along was to change behavior, to get (the department) to stop arresting people for First Amendment activity. The fact that the new . . . Chief has admitted to the rest of the world that these arrests under the last chief should not have happened helps to ensure that others don’t make the same mistake.”

In both his letter to Alleman and in an interview, Velleca chose to focus on the future.

“Weare officers have made great strides in the past seven months, and I am hopeful you will join us in continuing to move forward with mutual respect and cooperation,” he wrote in the letter.

“I think the officers, all people need to know, if you made a mistake, apologize, admit to it and move on. I think sometimes as police we’re afraid to do that,” he said in an interview. “I try to lead from the top, from out front. I hope the officers will see that if I can (apologize) on their behalf, they can do it, too.”

A written apology was “my (perhaps unrealistic) objective from the beginning,” Alleman wrote on his blog.

The department did not admit to wrongdoing in a settlement released last month with another person who sued for being arrested after filming officers during a traffic stop. The plaintiff in that case, Lebanon resident Carla Gericke, who was also represented by Hipple, received \$57,500.

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