

# Former fire chief Balzer gets \$55,000 in settlement with fire district, board

## Lawsuit had alleged civil rights violations

By R.J. Marx  
Cannon Beach Gazette

Former Cannon Beach Fire Chief Mike Balzer will receive a one-time payout of \$55,000 from the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District and the district's board of directors.

Details of the settlement, prepared by attorneys for Balzer, the fire district and the board of directors, were released Wednesday.

According to the agreement, Balzer will not receive attorneys' fees or any additional compensation from the fire district. Balzer agrees he will not apply or accept employment from the fire department again, and agrees not to pursue future litigation against the fire district or board of directors.

The settlement was dated Dec. 13. Balzer's civil rights lawsuit against the fire district was dismissed by U.S. Magistrate Judge Paul Papak in Portland on Jan. 4.

"My only comment would



Mike Balzer, left, served as fire chief from 2012 to October 2015.

### 'The lawsuit itself is the end of any dispute between Mr. Balzer and the Cannon Beach Rural Fire District.'

Judy Snyder,  
Balzer's attorney

be to express that the settlement is not an admission of fault to either side, but more a

business decision based on the costs of litigation moving forward, not just for the district

but for Mr. Balzer, as well," said Ron Downs, an attorney with the Special Districts Association of Oregon who represented the fire district and members of the board of directors.

Earlier this week, Balzer's attorney Judy Snyder said the former chief was "pleased with the resolution."

"He's pleased he's engaged in this process and that it resulted in a satisfactory outcome for him," Snyder said.

Balzer was fired in October 2015 in what the fire district's board described as a "personnel matter."

Balzer, who earned more than \$100,000 in annual salary and compensation, was faulted for "poor leadership" in a performance evaluation.

Balzer stated in his complaint that the board's actions led to damages to his reputation and standing in the community. He had sought compensation of almost \$678,000 and reinstatement of his duties and benefits.

"The lawsuit itself is the end of any dispute between Mr. Balzer and the Cannon Beach Rural Fire District," Snyder said this week.

# Serial hotel robber sentenced to 10 years

## Held up hotel at gunpoint

By Jack Heffernan  
EO Media Group



Ernest Lee Dean

not fully admitting to the crime — that he had "unconditional empathy" for Baldwin.

A serial robber who held up a Cannon Beach hotel at gunpoint was sentenced Tuesday, Jan. 17, to 10 years in prison.

Ernest Lee Dean, 44, pointed a handgun at hotel clerk Orlo Baldwin at the Stephanie Inn in January 2014 and forced him to hand over almost \$7,000 in cash.

After ordering Baldwin to lay on his stomach, Dean zip-tied Baldwin's hands behind his back and left him on the floor. Baldwin, an elderly man, testified Tuesday in Clatsop County Circuit Court that he was scared for his life, but that Dean gave him a reassuring pat on the back before leaving.

"The defendant, with great humanity, patted me on the back as if to say, 'It'll be OK old man,'" Baldwin said. "I hold no animosity toward him."

Baldwin left the courtroom soon after testifying, but Dean said later — while

who was arrested in Portland in February 2014 after an investigation that involved police in Cannon Beach, was responsible for an armed robbery spree at several hotels and is serving a 25-year prison sentence handed down in Multnomah County.

Judge Paula Brownhill ruled that Dean's 10-year sentence for the Cannon Beach robbery will be added to the Multnomah County penalty. Dean was convicted of first-degree robbery, second-degree kidnapping and felon in possession of a firearm.

"Based on the facts of the case, it is clear the defendant's intent was to commit more than one offense, and the defendant created a risk of qualitatively different harm or injury to the victim," Deputy District Attorney Steve Chamberlin wrote in a sentencing memorandum.

### CANNON BEACH POLICE LOG

**Jan. 8**  
**5:08 a.m.**, Highway 26: Police assist a woman who believes she is endangered. It is determined the woman is under the influence of a controlled substance; she is transported to Providence Seaside Hospital for evaluation.  
**7:19 p.m.**, 200 block Beaver Street: Criminal mischief in the second degree is reported at the school building where the gym door Plexiglass window has been broken. The building is secured by a maintenance worker and the school district office is notified.  
**8:23 p.m.**, 7900 block Cannon Road:

During a follow up on a domestic disturbance, one individual is arrested by the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office and charged with domestic assault.  
**Jan. 9**  
**7:00 a.m.**, 1600 block Whispering Pines Drive: Cannon Beach police assist other agencies at the stand-off in Seaside.  
**7:04 a.m.**, 1100 block Spruce Court: Police respond to a complaint of a coyote getting into garbage in a residential neighborhood. Prior to their arrival, they come upon a coyote who was apparently struck and killed by a vehicle. Its body is removed from

the highway.  
**Jan. 10**  
**9:17 p.m.**, Haystack Parking: Subject is warned about illegal overnight camping.  
**10:41 p.m.**, Highway 101: Police conduct a field interview with a man observed walking south on the beach who told police he was being picked up by a woman driver. The two are advised about recent break-ins in the area and of the parking regulations.  
**Jan. 11**  
**4:21 p.m.**, 1600 block Whispering Pines, Seaside: Cannon Beach police assist with active shooter situation

after the shooter barricades himself inside the residence.  
**11:38 p.m.**, 200 block S. Holladay Drive, Seaside: Cannon Beach police assist Seaside police with a suicidal subject at a neighborhood market. Subject volunteers to go to Providence Seaside Hospital.  
**Jan. 12**  
**3:44 a.m.**, 100 block Elliot Way: Police respond to a physical disturbance where a child is present. Female subject is arrested for assault.  
**7:17 p.m.**, 100 block Sunset Boulevard: A small black and gray terrier found wandering in the location of

the American Legion is subsequently returned to its owner  
**Jan. 13**  
**12:00 a.m.**, 1300 block Alder Drive: Police respond to a domestic verbal dispute. Both parties agree to separate for the night.  
**10:14 p.m.**, 800 block S. Roosevelt Drive, Seaside: Police dealing with an intoxicated man with a bloodied face at the Stop'n Go in Seaside first contact Medix who treats the man before transporting him to Providence Seaside Hospital.  
**11:48 p.m.**, Highway 101 and N. Cannon: A juvenile is arrested and

charged with DUI.  
**Jan. 14**  
**6:54 p.m.**, Highway 101 and N. Viewpoint: Police assist two subjects who have a flat tire.  
**7:13 p.m.**, 1200 block S. Hemlock: A motor vehicle hit-and-run is reported after one vehicle backs into another and leaves the scene. Police locate the driver of the vehicle which did the damage and suggest a civil resolution.  
**9:34 p.m.**, Ecola Park: Police assist in a search and rescue effort of a hiker believed lost on Tillamook Head.

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