

Civilian Complaint Review Board covers up NYPD misconduct, turns blind eye on sexual harassment within board: suit

Tracey Catapano-Fox, former executive director of the CCRB, says in a bombshell lawsuit that the board improperly fired her after she raised the alarm on board chair Richard Emery's 'decision to collude' with the NYPD and rampant sexual harassment within the board itself.

BY THOMAS TRACY, JOSEPH STEPANSKY, STEPHEN REX BROWN / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS /

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Civilian Complaint Review Board Chairman Richard Emery (left) and former Executive Director Tracy Catapano-Fox, who was fired and filed a lawsuit on Monday.

The police watchdog needs its own watchdog — the Civilian Complaint Review Board is in bed with the NYPD and has been ignoring and covering up misconduct, a bombshell lawsuit by its former executive director says.

In papers filed Monday in Manhattan Federal Court, Tracey Catapano-Fox says the board improperly fired her after she sounded the alarm on board chair Richard Emery's "decision to collude" with the NYPD, and to turn a blind eye to rampant sexual harassment within the CCRB itself.

Catapano-Fox — who was fired the same day her suit was filed — charges the civil rights lawyer attempted to conceal recent statistics on the number of stop-and-frisks in the city, and "suggested" claims not be investigated.

"Emery has made concerted efforts to conceal the true 'stop-and-frisk' statistics," Catapano-Fox's suit says.

"He is well aware that the statistics demonstrate that 'stop-and-frisk' has not decreased by 94% as claimed by the NYPD," the suit says.

He also kept mum about the NYPD's failure to discipline 28 officers who'd been found to have carried out "substantiated unlawful" stops.

The CCRB is intended to serve as an independent arbitrator of complaints against police officers — a role Mayor de Blasio has said he wants it to embrace more aggressively.

Emery has made concerted efforts to conceal the true 'stop-and-frisk' statistics.

But Emery, who was appointed by de Blasio in July, has already failed in his duty, the suit says.

"Emery also has colluded with the NYPD ... by repeatedly refusing to challenge its failure to discipline officers who violate the civil rights of the citizens of New York City,"

court papers read.

Catapano-Fox, who was appointed by Mayor Bloomberg in July 2013, also alleged that a recent report by the board on the NYPD's use of chokeholds — like the one that killed Eric Garner — is full of bogus stats as well.

The dysfunction allegedly infected the workplace, where one board member, Bishop Mitchell Taylor, told a female employee, "You're the hot stuff, baby," the suit says.

Cops said last month they were investigating Taylor for his role in a wild brawl in which he brandished a pickaxe outside a Queens hotel, demanding management hire workers from the nearby Queensbridge Houses.



Catapano-Fox alleges CCRB member Bishop Mitchell Taylor told a female employee she was 'hot stuff.'

Her reports to higher-ups about Taylor's alleged harassment, as well as Emery's alleged collusion with cops, were brushed aside by city officials and eventually led to her ouster, documents claim.

Her feud with Emery reached its climax when he successfully "stacked the board" against her, engineering a vote that called for her termination, according to documents. On Monday she was given an ultimatum: resign or be fired, Douglas Wigdor, Catapano-Fox's lawyer, said.

She refused to resign and got the ax.

Catapano-Fox alleges wrongful termination and seeks her old job back, as well as unspecified money damages.

But police sources portrayed Fox's rocky tenure as a result of her own abrasive style.



Richard Emery (second from right) 'suggested' claims against the NYPD not be investigated, Catapano-Fox (right) says in her lawsuit.

In one instance, she demanded that an employee with a debilitating cancer, who was given dispensation to work from home, return to work, claiming that no one should be allowed to work from home, sources said. The man had to go on medical leave because he could not physically come into work for health reasons, according to sources.

When Emery took over the board earlier this year, tensions rose again. Last month, the CCRB advertised Catapano-Fox's position on the NYC.gov page, even though she had not left the job — evidence, she said in her suit, of Emery's push to oust her.

"It's deeply troubling that board members who are entrusted with encouraging community members to complain about police misconduct would retaliate against their own executive director, who had the courage to stand up and report sexual harassment and the disregard of rules that implicate stop-and-frisk," Wigdor said.

A spokeswoman for the city Law Department said it had not yet been served with the suit.