



## Officials agree to settlement with inmate

*By TRISTAN SCOTT of the  
Missoulian*

Missoula County officials have agreed to pay \$490,000 to settle a federal civil rights lawsuit over the mistreatment and abuse of a mentally ill inmate, according to Hal Luttschwager, the county's risk manager.

The settlement is not finalized and must still be ratified by the Board of County Commissioners, Luttschwager said, but it has been agreed upon by both parties.

"The details are still in the grinder," Luttschwager said.

The basis for the civil rights lawsuit is the July 2006 pepperballing of an inmate who - after her arrest on a misdemeanor charge of disorderly conduct - was shot a half-dozen times with a pepperball gun while detained in a maximum-security holding cell. Detention officers, failing to recognize her mental illness, strapped the woman into a restraint chair for 44 minutes before decontaminating her from the effects of the pepper powder.

The lawsuit lists as defendants Missoula County, Sheriff Mike McMeekin, the Missoula County Detention Facility, Capt. Susan Hintz and Sgt. Jason Sorini, the officer who shot the woman. They are represented by Charles McNeil and Kathleen DeSoto.

Missoula attorneys David Paoli and Heather Latino represented the plaintiff.

Last month, a Montana civil rights group also publicized a devastating report detailing a two-year probe into the incident, which involved a 24-year-old woman referred to in the document as "Adele."

The report, published by Disability Rights Montana, describes a "cascade of events which violated Adele's rights under Montana's Constitution, statutes, and multiple jail policies and procedures."

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