City to pay LaMonte Armstrong $6.42 million for wrongful conviction

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LaMonte Armstrong

Armstrong

GREENSBORO — City officials agreed Friday to pay former resident LaMonte Armstrong more than $6 million to settle a lawsuit stemming from his wrongful, 17-year imprisonment for a murder he did not commit.

The City Council disclosed the settlement Friday afternoon on the heels of a closed session it held to consider the proposed $6.42 million payment to end Armstrong's civil lawsuit in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina.

The council approved the settlement 7-1, with Councilman Tony Wilkins dissenting.

Greensboro taxpayers will bear $3.15 million of the cost directly and a private insurance company that covers part of the city's liability will pay the other $3.27 million.

Armstrong, who now lives in Alamance County, won his freedom in June 2012 after new evidence emerged that he was not guilty of the crime that led to his conviction in 1995 — the killing seven years earlier of N.C. A&T professor Ernestine Compton in her Pichard Street home.

A palm print belonging to another man, the late Chris Caviness, also of Greensboro, was belatedly identified 24 years after Compton's death from a "latent" image that detectives took from the wall next to the chair in which Compton was strangled and stabbed in July 1988.

In a Friday evening telephone interview before heading to work, Armstrong said that the award would not change him in any way and that he plans to continue his workaday lifestyle. He works as a peer counselor at a Durham nonprofit that helps people caught up in substance abuse and the criminal justice system.

"It seems to me that the more I continue to be of service to my fellow man and help people, the more that God continues to serve me," the 66-year-old Armstrong said.