

Sun-Times exclusive: Sex harassment cover-up?

City official accused of waving off claims against his friend, Fire Commissioner John Brooks

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Sexual harassment accusations against Chicago Fire Commissioner John Brooks allegedly were shelved by city Office of Compliance chief Anthony Boswell, who was suspended last month by Mayor Daley for supposedly killing another harassment case.

Brooks intends to announce today that he will take several weeks of vacation time "to stay out of the way" and let the Office of Compliance investigate without any appearance of interference, said Larry Langford, spokesman for the Fire Department.

The Chicago Sun-Times questioned Brooks on Thursday about the allegations by Deidre Green, a payroll auditor for the Fire Department.

Brooks told her he "desired her in a sexual manner" and wanted to see her breasts, Green said. She claims that Brooks called her repeatedly and moved to lay her off when she refused his advances. An assistant commissioner for the city has told the Sun-Times that Boswell snuffed out an investigation into Green's claims.

Green provided cell phone records -- but no audio recordings -- to back up her claim that Brooks repeatedly called her on his personal cell phone. The calls started July 7, 2008, and continued until Oct. 19, 2008. On Sept. 19, 2008, there were three late-night calls for a total of 79 minutes, Green's phone records show.

Brooks acknowledged making the calls, but he said Green also called him, which she confirmed. The 52-year-old commissioner categorically denied propositioning or attempting to punish Green.

"I have never sexually harassed any woman or man in my life. I do not proposition women. I don't have to. Women usually proposition me. God has blessed me like that," Brooks said.

"And if I did, it wouldn't be a person who has these kinds of problems. This person was in deep trouble on the job and wanted help. That's why I called her."

He added, "She reached out to me. Just like she can produce phone records, so can I."

Pressed to describe Green's troubles on the job, Brooks said, "She filed some things against other people that she thought the fire commissioner, being black, would take care of -- and I don't work like that."

Asked why Green's name was subsequently placed on a layoff list, Brooks said, "It's based on seniority. Anything else is punitive. ... She was going to be laid off. She was the low person on the totem pole."

Green said she avoided a layoff and went on medical leave in January.

Green said she was assigned to fire headquarters at 35th and State, but her work took her around the city. Brooks' calls started in July 2008, when he contacted her while she was working on the Far South Side, she said.

'I saved your job'