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Wrongfully Convicted Men Win Settlement

AP

CHICAGO (April 12) - Two men who spent more than 12 years in prison after being wrongfully convicted in the rape and murder of a medical student will split an \$8 million settlement from the city.

Larry Ollins and Omar Saunders were to each receive \$4 million under a settlement approved Wednesday by the City Council.

Alderman Ed Smith called the case a tragedy and said the money can't make up for the time the men spent in prison. "Nothing pays like having your life intact without a blemish," he said.

Two other men who were also wrongfully convicted in the case previously received settlements. In 2003, the city settled with Calvin Ollins, Larry Ollins' cousin, for \$1.5 million. In December, the city approved a \$900,000 settlement for Marcellius Bradford.

All four men were arrested in the slaying of Rush University medical student Lori Roscetti, 23, who was abducted on Chicago's West Side, raped and beaten to death in October 1986.

In 1988, Saunders and Calvin and Larry Ollins were sentenced to life in prison; Bradford received a reduced sentence for agreeing to testify against Larry Ollins.

All were exonerated by DNA tests in late 2001 and were pardoned the next year by then-Gov. George Ryan.

Alderman Tom Allen was Saunders' defense attorney during his criminal trial. He said he recently looked through the case file and saw that he had filed a motion asking for DNA testing to be performed. The motion was denied.

"The criminal justice system did finally work," he said. "It was through DNA evidence that these gentlemen finally got their lives back."

In 2004, Eddie Harris and Duane Roach pleaded guilty to raping and killing Roscetti. Officials have said DNA testing confirmed the two men committed the crime.

Jenny Hoyle, spokeswoman for the city's law department, said Saunders and Larry Ollins will receive more money than their former co-defendants in part because the amount was recommended by a federal mediator.

Also, she said, the two were only charged in Roscetti's slaying after they were implicated by Bradford and Calvin Ollins in their confessions to Chicago police. Bradford and Calvin Ollins have said their confessions were coerced.

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