

Judge blocks release of video in assault case against SPD officer

The judge's ruling barred the release of patrol-car video showing a confrontation between a Seattle police officer and a suspect who had assaulted the officer's wife, also a Seattle police officer.

By [Steve Miletich](#)

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A King County judge on Thursday granted a request to block the release of patrol-car video considered to be key evidence in an assault case brought against a Seattle police officer.

Superior Court Judge Julie Spector issued her [written ruling](#) after listening earlier in the day to arguments from the officer's attorney, Jeffrey Grant, and a King County deputy prosecutor on whether an injunction, blocking the release, should be granted.

Spector found that the privacy rights of the officer, Chris Hairston, would be violated under state law if the dashboard-camera video was released to the news media under public-disclosure requests.

The judge extended an injunction granted on May 13 by King County Court Commissioner Pro Tem Eric Watness, who temporarily blocked the release of the video until Spector could hear full arguments.

The King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office had planned to release the video to The Seattle Times and KOMO-TV in response to public-disclosure requests. Times news partner KING 5 later made a request.

Hairston's attorneys moved to [block the release](#) of the video.

The video could be made public in the future if it is admitted during a court proceeding in Hairston's case.

Hairston has pleaded not guilty to a [misdemeanor assault charge](#) stemming from a Sept. 24 incident in which his wife, Katie, who also is a Seattle police officer, responded with another officer to a report that a person had passed out near Seattle Central Community College. While dealing with several people who had been drinking alcohol, Katie Hairston was assaulted.

When Chris Hairston arrived, he is alleged to have assaulted a handcuffed suspect. A Seattle police report said Hairston could be seen on the video forcefully using his hands on the man.

Hairston was charged by the City Attorney's Office, which has declined to release the video, citing legal restrictions.

The Times requested the video from the county Prosecuting Attorney's Office, which obtained an assault conviction against the man who attacked Katie Hairston.

In seeking an injunction, Chris Hairston's attorneys argued, among other things, that disclosure of the video would jeopardize Hairston's right to a fair trial; violate Hairston's privacy interests; and conflict with a state privacy law regarding the release of dashboard-camera video while criminal or civil litigation is pending.

The county Prosecuting Attorney's Office argued the video was subject to public disclosure.

Spector also blocked the release of a second video, which has audio of the incident leading to the suspect's arrest.

The Seattle Police Officers' Guild has sharply criticized City Attorney Pete Holmes for charging Hairston, saying Hairston simply grabbed the suspect and that his conduct should be handled internally by the police department.

Prior to Hairston's request, the guild's president, Sgt. Rich O'Neill, questioned why Holmes had not released the video.

Spector found that those issues were irrelevant.

Information from Seattle Times archives is included in this story.

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