



## Jury awards \$3.25M in dog bite verdict against Mountlake Terrace

Mountlake Terrace dog was euthanized after 2022 incident involving fellow officer.

By Aspen Anderson

Thursday, April 10, 2025 5:30am | [LOCAL NEWS](#)

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EVERETT — A Snohomish County jury awarded \$3.25 million to Dana Bahrakis on March 26 after finding the city of Mountlake Terrace negligent in a 2022 police K-9 attack that left her with permanent injuries.

Bahrakis, a former K-9 officer with the Stillaguamish Tribe Police Department, was attacked by Mountlake Terrace Police Department's narcotics dog, Jax, around 5:40 p.m. on March 23, 2022, outside Angel of the Winds Casino. Bahrakis and Mountlake Terrace police Officer Heidi Froisland — Jax's handler — had just completed a joint training session when Froisland allegedly lost control of the nearly 60-pound pit bull, which then bit Bahrakis's left arm, according to Bahrakis' attorney Terence Traverso.

The attack lasted approximately 38 seconds, during which Jax bit Bahrakis nine times, causing severe tissue damage and permanent ulnar nerve damage that required surgery, according to Traverso. She was off-duty for 10 months following the incident and ultimately left her department and moved to the East Coast after her K-9 position was eliminated, Traverso said.

"She almost lost her career," Traverso said. "She trained for years to be a good officer. She never thought in a million years the danger would come from another officer's dog."

The city of Mountlake Terrace acknowledged in court documents that Jax bit Bahrakis, but argued that she had provoked the dog — claims the court dismissed due to lack of evidence. The city also suggested Bahrakis voluntarily assumed the risk and subjected herself to her injuries, according to documents, stating "That the injuries and damages, if any, claimed by the Plaintiff were proximately caused or contributed to by the fault of Plaintiff."

All of these defenses were dismissed due to lack of evidence, according to court documents.

Traverso described the city's defense as "shameful," saying, "This is a shameful example of government officials refusing to accept its clear fault and, instead, blaming others."

"Juries are unpredictable, and the city is pursuing our appellate options. Beyond that, the city will not be commenting on ongoing litigation," said Sienna Spencer-Markles, a spokesperson for the city of Mountlake Terrace, in an email.

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According to Traverso, the dog had a known history of aggression, including biting its handler earlier the day of the attack. That earlier incident was not reported, in violation of department policy, he said.

"This dog broke like a ticking time bomb," he said. "It finally went off."

Jax was euthanized after the incident, and the city terminated its K-9 program in late 2023.

The decision to suspend the Mountlake Terrace K-9 program was due to changes in drug laws following the Blake ruling, Spencer-Markles said. The “Blake decision,” referring to a 2021 Washington Supreme Court case that restricts how police enforce drug possession laws.

The city filed [post-trial motions](#) challenging the verdict, arguing the plaintiff failed to meet the burden of proof and juror hardship and weather conditions may have rushed deliberations.

Despite the city’s [post-trial motions](#), Traverso said the verdict demonstrates the jury’s acknowledgment of the extent of Bahrakis’ injuries.

The Stillaguamish Tribe Police Department declined to comment.

“She is trying to keep the remainder of her career as a law enforcement officer, which she loves,” he said. “This happened through no fault of her own.”

A court hearing to [review](#) the city’s request to overturn the verdict or seek a new trial is scheduled for April 18.

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